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ALSO: 15 YEARS OF NAT GEO CHANNEL U.S. | 2015'S TRAILBLAZERS

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Films of Record and Channel 4 dug deep into a murder investigation for *The Murder Detectives*.

**"Change is hard, 41
change is good."**



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This critter from Nat Geo Wild's *Wild Yellowstone* might just be celebrating NGC U.S.'s 15th anniversary.



on the cover

Acclaimed documentarian Stanley Nelson examines the history and legacy of the Black Panther Party in *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*. (Photo: courtesy of Sam Aleshinloye)

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Filmmaker Andrew Jarecki (left, with *The Jinx* subject Robert Durst) is behind one of the year's top docs, and is one of 2015's Trailblazers.

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WHAT WE WATCHED

I type this, 2016 is a matter of days old and the events and offerings of the year prior are still fresh in my memory (which, given my advancing age, is never something to be taken for granted). Over the course of this first issue of 2016, you'll see several references to the changes that have impacted the non-fiction and unscripted content industry over the course of the previous 12 months – some changes that are welcome, while others... not so much. But outside of, or perhaps in spite of, the ups and downs that impacted the business in 2015, there was no lack of incredible content to immerse one's self in, on TV, in the cinema, and online. Here's a look at several of the projects that caught the fancy of my colleagues here at *realscreen*, and for more insight and opinions on the year that was, check out our Year in Review feature, beginning on page 32.

Daniele Alcinii, staff writer: The trailer alone for Andrew Jarecki's *The Jinx* had me absorbed in this case for weeks. The captivating six-part series never once failed to disappoint. It is disturbing, emotional and, at times, chillingly funny. Durst's deadpan reaction when asked whether he'd purposely shaved his head and eyebrows to avoid detection while on the lam still haunts me: "How do you accidentally shave your eyebrows?"

Manori Ravindran, news editor: *TransFatty Lives* is Patrick O'Brien's self-directed journey of his life with ALS – beginning at the time of his diagnosis in 2005 at 30 and spanning 10 years – and is filmed with humor, moxie and guts. As much a gritty illustration of this confounding disease as a declaration of war, O'Brien bravely documents the beauty he sees in ALS, and highlights why others should, too.

Kevin Ritchie, contributing writer: *The Look of Silence*, Joshua Oppenheimer's follow-up to *The Act Of Killing*, revisits the mass killings that took place in Indonesia in the late 1960s from the point of view of Adi, an optometrist who sets out to learn how his brother was killed. As Adi questions the perpetrators about the atrocity, the emotional weight of a subject left unspoken for so long seems to permeate the air through the exacting and unsettlingly serene ways Oppenheimer frames the drama.

And now, on to 2016. On behalf of *realscreen*, let me say we're greatly looking forward to what you have on tap for us in the year ahead.

Cheers,
Barry Walsh
Editor and content director
realscreen

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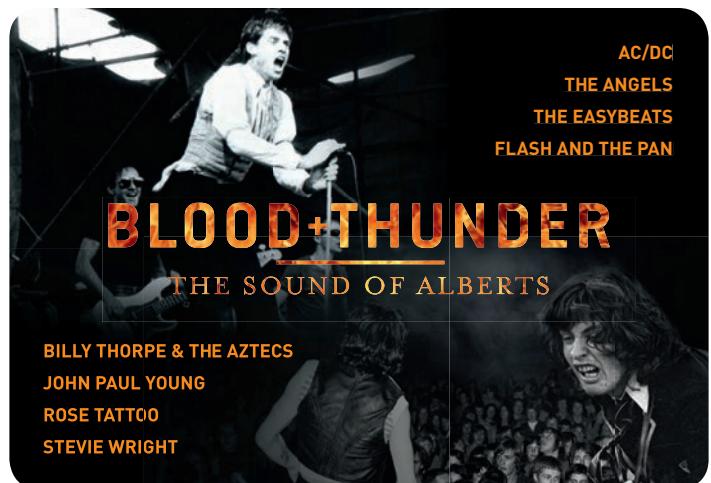
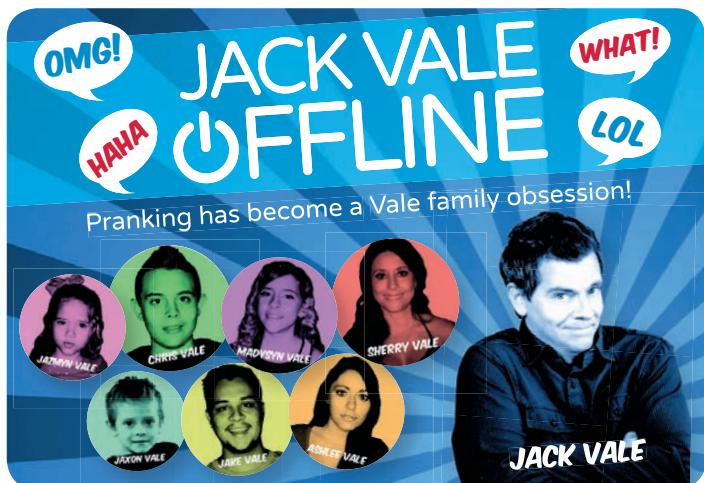
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Welcome, 2016!

As I write this, last-minute Christmas shoppers are kicking into high gear, holiday cards are popping into inboxes all over the world, and most businesses are starting to wind down for the passage into the new year.

In many ways 2015 has been a year of change for our industry and, by default, *realscreen* and our various events.

From the tsunami-like wave of consolidation that marked the year, to the incessant media ruminations about “the changing cable model,” cord cutting and the “death of reality TV,” the tone of the industry has, in various ways, been more subdued than in the past several years. That’s on one hand.

On the other, there seems to be a reinvigorated passion for achieving creative excellence across the board and for finding new and powerful ways to capture the attention of fickle audiences. It’s a coming of age. A maturation.

With *realscreen* as your one-stop source for industry news, views and trends via all of our channels, nowhere will these changes be reflected as much as in the program at this year’s *Realscreen* Summit in Washington, D.C. Together with the advisory board (pictured on page 59) – helmed by **Jana Bennett**, president and general manager, History; and **Brent Montgomery**, ITV America – our content director, Barry Walsh, and conference producer, Tiffany Rushton, have put together an agenda that mirrors what’s actually happening in the global non-fiction industries. From a deep dive into 4K and VR production and programming, to the effect the resurgence of the doc is having on the industry, to a look at the burgeoning Asian market as well as a very impressive lineup of keynotes and panels – we’ve got you covered.

Wishing all of you a very happy, peaceful and prosperous 2016.

‘Til next time, go well.

Claire Macdonald
VP & publisher
realscreen

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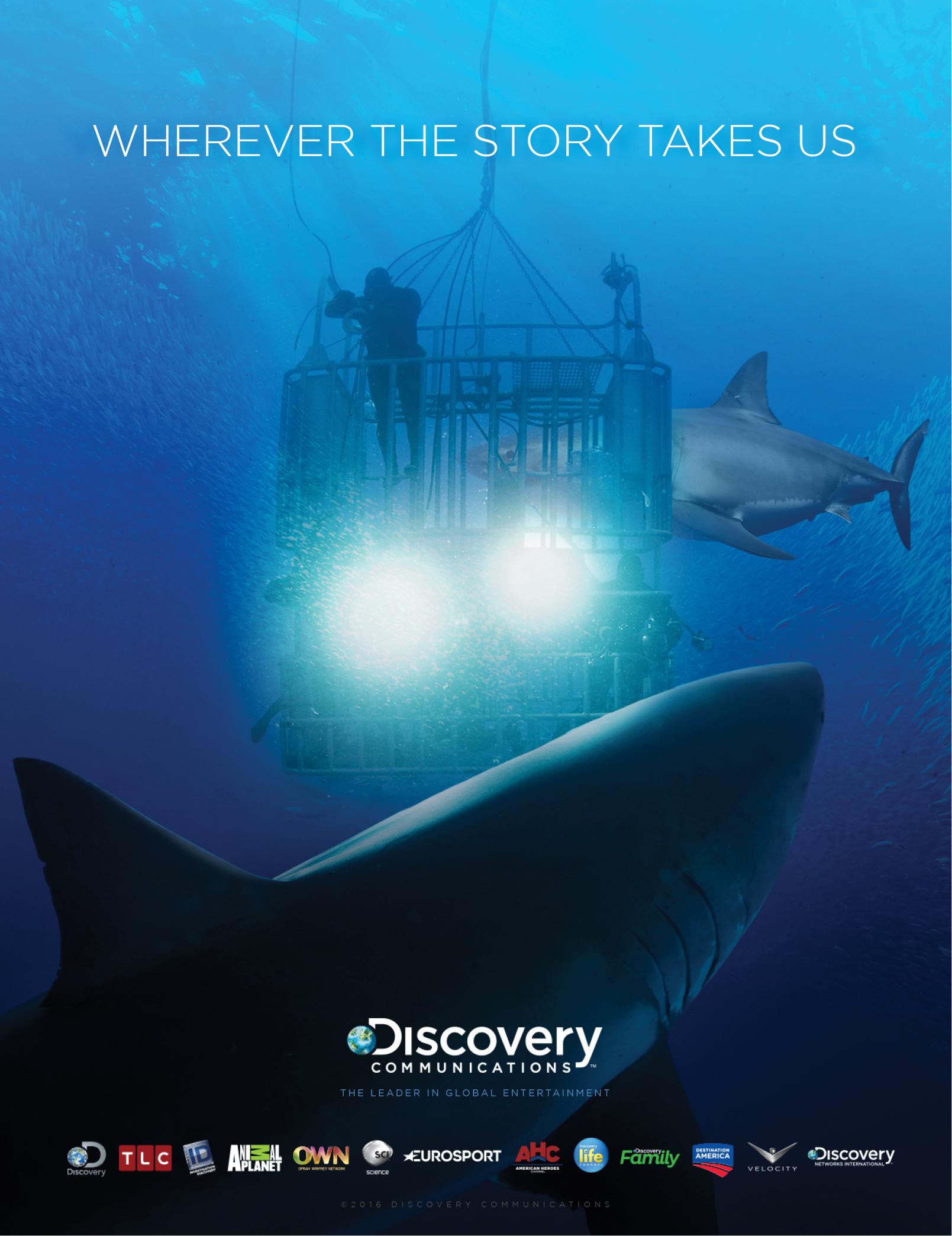
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(Photos by Rahoul Ghose)

NAT GEO GLOBAL NETWORKS UNVEILS LEADERSHIP TEAM

Pastore to head up global unscripted programming and development, with Mykura as EVP. BY MANORI RAVINDRAN

Almost two months after she assumed leadership of National Geographic Global Networks (see page 68), CEO Courteney Monroe has appointed her senior team.

Tim Pastore, president of original programming and production, has his remit expanded to encompass all unscripted programming for National Geographic Channel globally.

The development, production and operations teams in London, along with those in New York and Washington DC will now report to Pastore, who will continue reporting to Monroe. In addition, the exec will oversee the company's in-house production unit, National Geographic Studios. Pastore first came to the Nat Geo team through the Studios division, following a stint at BBC Worldwide Productions.

Hamish Mykura – previously executive VP and head of international content for National Geographic Channels International – now becomes executive VP of programming and development for National Geographic Global Networks and head of the London office, where he will continue to be based.

Meanwhile, Alan Eyes will remain as senior VP of programming and development, based out of Washington DC. He will focus on global unscripted content, and serve as Pastore's most senior programming team member in the U.S., while working closely with Mykura.

Heather Moran, executive VP of programming, strategy and operations, will also assume that post globally. She is to oversee global production management, production services and operations and business systems.

All three execs – Mykura, Eyes and Moran – report to Pastore.

Over at Nat Geo Wild, Geoff Daniels, executive VP and GM of the net, now assumes the role globally. National Geographic Studios is to report to Daniels on all productions for Nat Geo Wild, and the exec will continue to report to Monroe.

Janet Han Vissering, senior VP of development and production for Wild, will continue to work under Daniels, and also have a global remit.

Meanwhile, Brad Dancer – who in October was upped to executive VP of programming planning and research – now takes on the position in a global capacity. He will oversee the global planning and scheduling strategies as well as acquisitions for National Geographic Channel, Nat Geo Wild, Nat Geo People and Nat Geo Mundo across linear and non-linear platforms. The exec also reports to Monroe.

Joining Dancer's team is Jules Oldroyd, who will re-locate from London – where she was senior VP of programming and strategic development for NGCI – to Washington DC. She will work with Dancer on international program planning and scheduling for NGC and Nat Geo Wild, and on aligning global roll-outs for premiere programming.

Oldroyd will also oversee Nat Geo People.

The reshuffled exec roster follows the expanded partnership between National Geographic Society and 21st Century Fox.

National Geographic in September sold its controlling stake in the cable channel as well as *National Geographic* magazine and other publishing, travel and licensing assets, in a deal worth US\$725 million, creating National Geographic Partners. 21st Century Fox now has a 73% share in the company, while the Society has a 27% stake.



HBO ACQUIRES JAMES FOLEY DOC

HBO Documentary Films has acquired the U.S. TV rights for Brian Oakes' *Jim: The James Foley Story* from New York-based Kunhardt Films.

The doc recounts the life story of American photojournalist James Foley, who was kidnapped by ISIS militants in 2012, held captive for two years and publicly executed in August 2014. The film features intimate interviews with family, friends, colleagues and fellow hostages. Oakes, too, was a childhood friend to Foley.

Jim: The James Foley Story had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in the U.S. documentary competition on January 23. HBO will broadcast the film on February 6.

Eva Lipman, George Kunhardt and Teddy Kunhardt serve as producers on the film, with Peter Kunhardt acting as executive producer.

Cinetic Media, on behalf of Kunhardt Films, negotiated the deal with HBO. The agreement marks the 10th collaboration between the U.S. premium cable network and Kunhardt Films, following such docs as *Nixon by Nixon: In His Own Words*, *Teddy: In His Own Words* and *Gloria: In Her Own Words*.

"I made this film to carry on the stories that Jim needed us to know," said Oakes in a statement. "It's important that we understand the significant role of today's conflict journalists and why they risk their lives to tell the world how bad it can be." **Daniele Alcinii**

Greenlit & Gone

A look at what's on the way from assorted networks, and what's on the way out.

GREENLIT

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Pitch Slapped

Network: Lifetime
Production companies:
All3Media America, Studio
Lambert, Insomnia TV

Basketball Moms

Network: WE tv
Production company:
A. Smith & Co. Productions

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Network: BBC2
Production companies:
12 Yard Productions,
Black Dog Television

Mob Wives

Network: VH1
Production companies:
Left/Right, Electus,
The Weinstein Company

POINTED ARROW: A Producer's Perspective

BY JOHN SMITHSON

It's confession time. I've always found the tech stuff that surrounds our business incredibly boring.

I'm also wary of the next big thing, be it 3D, 4K or VR.

It's not that I am a technophobe. You can't survive in this game with a "head in the sand" attitude. I'm keen to explore all avenues that will enhance the creativity of what we do. I'm equally keen to explore new platforms as much as I work within the old.

It's just that I don't care what's under the bonnet and when the agenda is tech driven rather than creatively led, I just glaze over.

I guess my resistance to the "next new thing" has hardened because of the monster disappointment that was 3D.

There was a time not too long ago when virtually every non-scripted producer was evangelical about how this was a true game changer. You were nobody if you didn't have a 3D strategy. Soon we would all be prosperous and happy, making lavish, super-ambitious 3D specials.

Well, we weren't. Apart from a handful of high-end, well-funded projects, this was a revolution that fizzled away. It may continue to work on film, but not in TV. Viewers don't seem desperate to view it and broadcasters seem very reluctant to pay for it.

It was all too fiddly and insular. Too much mucking around with glasses, too many shots simply not working. It felt underwhelming and disorientating. Thus, like the vast majority of players in non-scripted production, our 3D output amounted to zero hours.

But a couple of recent developments have caused me to be a bit more open in my thinking about new tech.

At the recent excellent edition of the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers in Vienna, I had the dubious pleasure of being a guinea pig for a panel to discuss the future of VR and its impact on the non-scripted world. It involved lying on a gurney, wearing VR glasses and being taken into a virtual world where I was in a coma, hopeless on my hospital bed as doctors, nurses and distraught friends and family fussed around me.



The technology was a bit disappointing but – I was assured – will improve. What did work was the immersive storytelling of the mini-drama the developers had created for VR.

It was a great example of using this fast emerging technology to draw you into a story. It's going to be some time before VR is part of the fabric of what we do, but it was an exciting and thought-provoking taste of the future.

There's no doubt the development of VR will be powered by the giants of the gaming business and the technology is going to get better very quickly.

What about a technology that's already having an impact – 4K? Being asked to moderate a panel on this at the Realscreen Summit has caused me to do some homework.

4K feels real, now and happening. It's reported that 80% of high-end TV sets purchased in a top London store for this sort of home tech are in 4K. Within 10 years half of all U.S. households will have 4K. The cost is less than most people dared imagine and the customers like what they see. But where is the content to binge view in megapixel 4K heaven? There's no doubt it's on its way, but 4K viewers are not exactly spoiled for choice at present.

The irony is that most people will soon have devices – mostly smart phones like the iPhone 6S – which can shoot in 4K. That's great news for those of us that make shows with UGC.

It does feel like 4K is here for the long term, marking the inevitable evolution from SD, through HD to 4K. I have tiny reservations – the saturation and excessively sharp images are not always to my taste. But overall it's perfect for factual TV, as well as sport and drama.

At Arrow, we're already shooting with it and future-proofing much of our current output. We're developing lots of content where 4K is integral to the pitch.

Crucially, unlike 3D, the market will pay for quality 4K shows. So, at last, maybe it's time that I fully embrace tech.

John Smithson is the creative director of Arrow Media, an indie he co-founded in 2011. Previously he was chief executive at Darlow Smithson Productions.

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YAHOO SHUTTERS SCREEN

Yahoo has shuttered its on-demand streaming service Yahoo Screen.

The tech company launched a rebranded version of the service in 2011 alongside a partnership with Viacom and eight original programs in an attempt to chip away market share from SVOD giants Netflix and Hulu. Since February 2013, the company's digital portal has seen a decline in U.S. traffic by 25%, according to AdAge.

"At Yahoo, we're constantly reviewing and iterating on our products as we strive to create the best user experience," a Yahoo spokesperson said in a statement. "With that in mind, video content from Yahoo as well as our partners has been transitioned from Yahoo Screen to our Digital Magazine properties so users can discover complementary content in one place."

The news comes months after the digital giant partnered with the National Football League to deliver the first-ever global live stream of an NFL game between the Buffalo Bills and Jacksonville Jaguars last October.

In June, Yahoo revived its efforts to attract young documentary talent and audiences with a relaunched version of doc series 'Viewfinder,' which aimed to release one doc project per month in addition to monthly docs produced through partnerships with journalism and film schools and non-profit news organization Retro Report. DA



BEST PRACTICES:

WHAT SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DO ON THEIR WEEKENDS

BY CHRIS PALMER AND SHANNON LAWRENCE

Every Friday afternoon, countless professionals watch the clock in anticipation of the weekend, looking forward to being able to relax. Indeed, it can be very tempting to counterbalance the hard work of the week with extreme laziness on days off. Yet, whiling away the weekend unproductively, perhaps lying on the couch or watching copious amounts of television, can leave you feeling unfulfilled by the start of the next work week. How can you both enjoy your weekends and have them serve a productive purpose? Here are seven insights from successful professionals on how to make your weekends serve you well.

Exercise your mind. When you clock out of the office on Friday, you may be inclined to stop working your mind as well. But it's important to keep your mind active and your creative juices flowing throughout the weekend. Seek out challenging but enjoyable, stimulating activities on your weekend, such as trying out a sport, crafting, writing, or learning a new language.

Refresh and reset. Before settling into the thick of the weekend, take a few minutes to reflect on the progress you made during the week, and prepare by refreshing your goals and resetting your priorities for what to accomplish in the week ahead. If you didn't get as much done this week as you'd hoped, jot down a to-do list for the coming week that includes unfinished tasks at the top.

Avoid the media trap. Every once in a while, it is enjoyable to spend an afternoon watching movies or television or surfing the web as a way to unwind. However, many professionals spend the majority of their working hours sitting and staring at electronic screens. You owe it to yourself not to spend your weekends doing the same. Perhaps budget time to watch a TV show, but plan to get out and do something fresh – a street fair, author talk, community service, whatever – and/or meet up with friends for social interaction and good conversation.

Stay in shape. Physical fitness boosts one's energy level and contributes to mental acuity. Being active, whether walking, running,

working out or participating in sports, can help you to feel ready and energized for the week ahead. Being fit can make you feel better about yourself too.

Take in a bit of culture. Relaxing intellectual and cultural pursuits such as visiting museums or taking in a play can open your mind and increase your knowledge in an entertaining manner. The arts provide a way to recognize and explore new perspectives that can benefit you in the workplace.

Turn a page. Reading books is one of the most productive ways to spend your time, and can serve as a source of relaxation. Reading both fiction and non-fiction on a variety of subjects can keep you engaged with the world through the exploration of different issues.

Catch up with friends and family. Don't let your work life fill your time and mind to the point where you are too preoccupied or too tired to engage with the people you care about. The most important thing you can do with your time off is share experiences with your loved ones. It is rewarding and invigorating, and an important reminder that one reason for working is to be a successful, supportive relative and friend. Your circle of friends and family stands behind you and your professional endeavors; it is only fitting that you enjoy life with them when you have the opportunity.

Weekends are not two regularly scheduled days for sloth at the end of a busy week. While the weekend is there for you to unwind and take a break from work, success is built upon good choices about use of time. The freedom to plan your weekends offers a prime opportunity to keep yourself vibrant, engaged, and satisfied on your path toward personal and professional success.

*Professor Chris Palmer is director of American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and author of three books, including the newly published *Confessions of a Wildlife Filmmaker* and *Now What, Grad? Your Path to Success After College*. Shannon Lawrence is a filmmaker and MFA candidate at American University. •*

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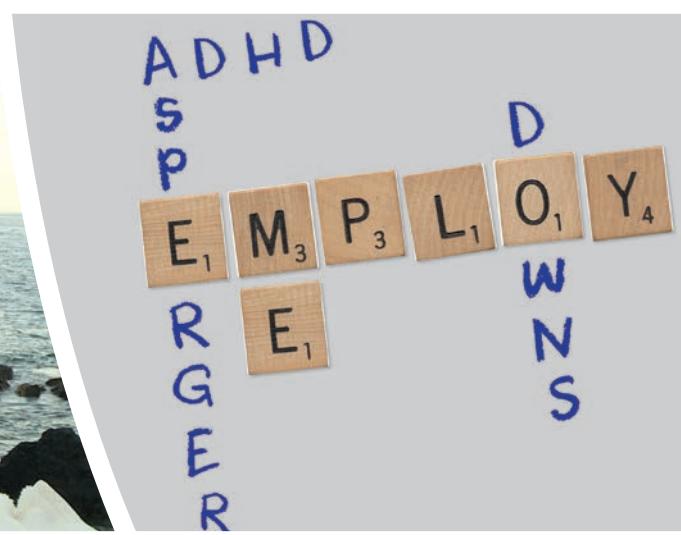
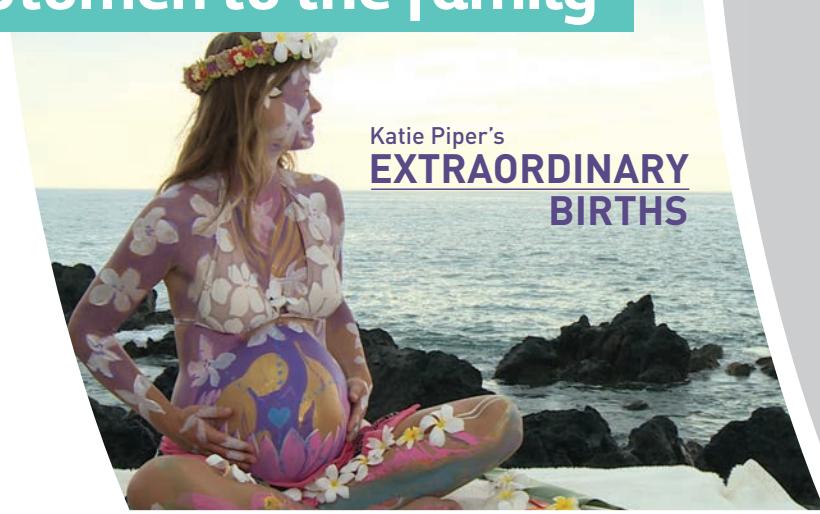
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Building

UK prodco Films of Record sought to create a docuseries that would follow a murder investigation in real time, while letting the story unfold like a drama. With Channel 4 on board, the crucial piece of the puzzle was finding – and following – the crime itself.

Detective Chief Inspector Andy Bevan led the investigation featured in Channel 4's *The Murder Detectives*.

a mystery

BY DANIELE ALCINII

The success of “Nordic Noir” detective series such as crime drama *The Bridge*, combined with the rapturous reaction given to the crime podcast *Serial* (which debuted its second season in early December) has served to whet the appetite of factual programming audiences, hungry for true mysteries, plot twists and cliffhangers.

While true crime has long been a mainstay in factual television, networks and producers alike have stepped back in recent years from longstanding formats that see criminal investigations neatly wrapped at the culmination of each episode. The focus has now shifted to immersive episodic serials centered on one distinct crime.

In 2015, HBO’s critically acclaimed six-part miniseries *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst* further laid the groundwork for a raft of network commissions looking to capitalize on the long-form, true crime trend. December and January alone saw the premieres of three such series, including Netflix’s *Making a Murderer*, focused on the trial and incarceration of accused murderer Steven Avery; Discovery Channel’s *Killing Fields*, following an investigation into the 1997 death of a Louisiana State University graduate student; and Channel 4’s vérité-style trilogy *The Murder Detectives*, chronicling the 18-month police investigation into the fatal stabbing of 19-year-old Nicholas Robinson in the hallway of his Bristol apartment complex.

“Viewers are being inundated with countless varieties of the same thing,” Neil Grant, executive producer of Channel 4’s *The Murder Detectives* and MD of Films of Record, tells *realscreen*. “It’s that degree of superficiality that I think viewers are becoming increasingly exhausted by, and what they’ve retained is a real wish to understand process [and] how exactly [detectives] went about solving a particular crime.”

The Murder Detectives weaves together three underlying stories. The first shadows a team of detectives from the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, led by Detective Chief Inspector Andy Bevan, as they piece together Robinson’s



murder. The series also tackles how the bereaved parents cope with the crime, through highly intimate conversations, press conferences and the burial of their second child; and also follows the family of the accused and its desperate attempt to save their son from incarceration.

It’s gritty stuff. CCTV footage captures what the Films of Record team and BAFTA-winning director David Nath couldn’t: Robinson’s final moments. Staggering from the apartment block and into an adjacent alleyway, the fatally wounded teen manages to dial for help. “I’ve been stabbed,” he tells an emergency response line operator before succumbing to his injuries moments later.

The project originated when Films of Record pitched its plan to incorporate the dramatic storytelling techniques found in crime serials into a real-life murder investigation. But it would prove challenging to find a case that could be followed practically in real-time, and of course, to secure the access needed to tell the story from myriad perspectives, including the detectives, and the families impacted by the crime.

As such, Films of Record producers conducted investigations of their own to find the right case for their treatment, with a few potentially fitting

Films of Record and director David Nath gained remarkable access to the investigation as it unfolded.



The documentary team followed family members of both the victim and the accused.

“It was very challenging for us to keep our nerves about making the program, keeping consent and assuming all the access could be retained.”

the bill. But the Robinson case proved to be the keeper, with full consent for access on offer.

“It was an incredibly big risk [to commission] because we filmed a number of story variations... but it’s part of our remit to take risks like that,” said Amy Flanagan, deputy head of documentaries at Channel 4. “I’m a

big believer in taking risks in a lot of factual television because the whole point is that you don’t know what’s going to happen.”

While producers and broadcasters can assemble the building blocks of a production six to nine months ahead of filming a single frame, programs following such sensitive matters can often have a spanner thrown into the works. Would the team truly be able to secure

access, even at the most crucial moments of the investigation? Would the perpetrator be found?

Production teams were required to react with very little notice in order to respond to what was happening on the ground in real time, as the investigation moved at a brisk pace.

“We had no idea – it was the ‘known unknown’ in a way,” Grant remarks. “It was very difficult and challenging for both us, the program-makers, and the channel to keep our nerves about making

the program, keeping consent, assuming that all of the access could be retained and delivering the project with the ambition both creatively and journalistically that we had for it.

“I think it was one of the boldest, riskiest pieces of television I have done in my career.”

However, as exciting as it may be to take a chance on an editorially ambitious project that encompasses a case brimming with sensitive twists and turns, Flanagan was also cognizant of the network’s competition in a growing multi-channel environment where it’s increasingly difficult to cut through.

“Had we done a straight-access documentary inside the police investigation, it would feel quite familiar,” she says. “The boldness of trying to tell this story with no commentary and no interviews, to make it stylistically distinctive and by scheduling it three nights in one week, it helped it stand out in a schedule.”

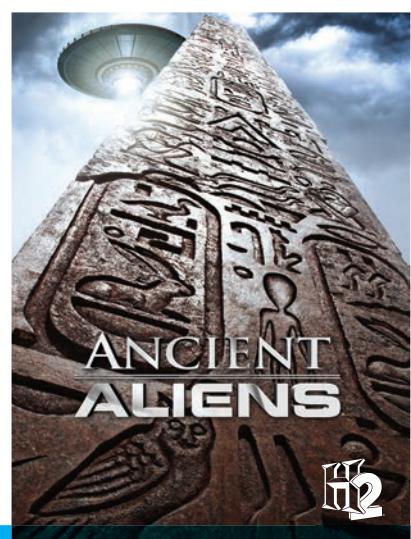
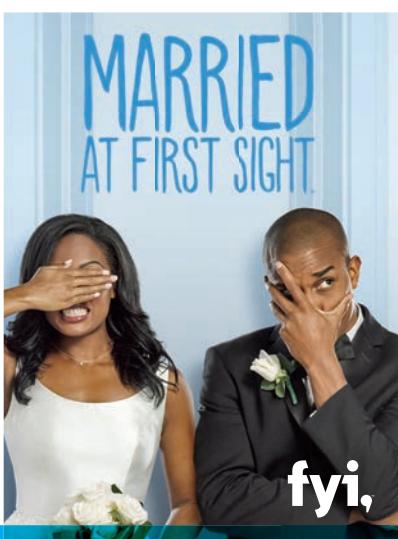
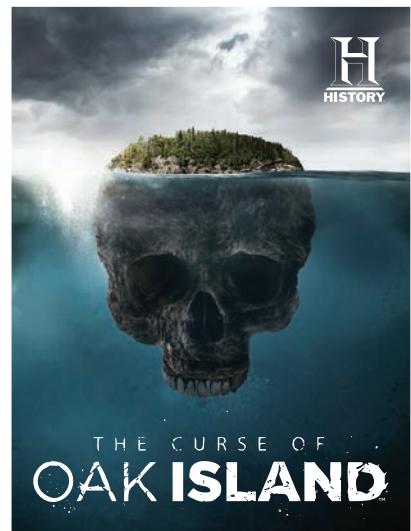
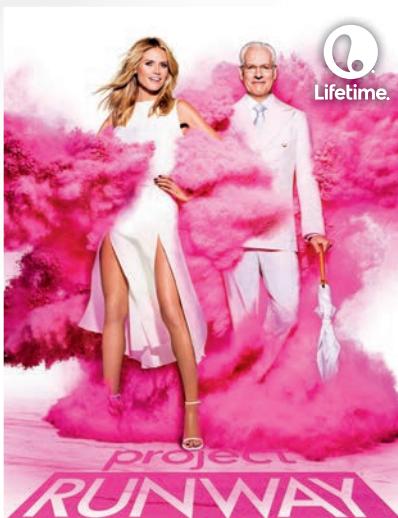
Early December saw *The Murder Detectives* premiere across three consecutive nights with its inaugural episode pulling in an audience of 1.4 million viewers, according to the Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board, the organization that compiles television ratings in the UK.

The ratings fall in line with Channel 4’s primetime slot average for the year. Reviews in the UK press, meanwhile, were largely favorable, with *The Independent* saying the ‘obs-doc shot like a drama’ approach “lingers in the mind longer than fiction,” and *The Telegraph* giving it five stars while calling it “intensely powerful.”

While Channel 4 is mindful of the true crime content trend and the potential of oversaturating the market with exhaustive and like-minded series, Flanagan has commissioned a documentary series that “might build on *The Murder Detectives*.” Currently in the early stages of production, the 4 x 60-minute program is expected in a couple of years.

“This is essentially a documentary series and it’s a true story, but it’s not a past tense story – this has happened in people’s lives very recently,” the commissioning exec says of the forthcoming project. “Whilst it’s our job to make all of our television a compelling watch, it’s not entertainment to be rolled out [on a continual basis].

“I hope this is the beginning of a new kind of documentary making, but I can’t imagine that we’d do loads and loads of it.” •



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TRAILBLAZERS

2015

In what was a challenging year in the non-fiction and unscripted industry, there was still plenty of work worth celebrating. It's time once again to salute the risk-takers, innovators, explorers and pace-setters of the past year with our annual selection of Trailblazers.



**ANDREW JARECKI
AND MARC SMERLING**
Filmmakers



Whether or not you were a fan of HBO's *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst*, its chilling denouement was virtually impossible to ignore this past winter. Directed by Andrew Jarecki and produced and shot by Marc Smerling, the six-part series exposed new evidence around New York real estate heir Robert Durst's connections to the murders of his first wife, Kathleen Durst; his former best friend, Susan Berman; and his neighbor in Galveston, Texas, Morris Black.

The result of seven years of research by the filmmakers, the Emmy Award-winning docuseries captivated audiences with hyper-stylized re-enactments of the 72-year-old's troubled past, rare documents and photos, and an absorbing interview with Durst himself. But few could have foreseen the incidents of March 15, when hours before the last episode

aired, Durst was arrested in New Orleans in connection with a murder investigation. Durst's notoriety subsequently exploded when – after being confronted in the finale with a sample of his handwriting that matches a letter sent by Berman's killer to the police – a live mic catches him uttering, "What the hell did I do? Killed them all, of course."

Though concerns have been raised about the series' skittish timeline, few docuseries have infiltrated pop culture as incisively as *The Jinx*. Now, with Durst facing a new trial in 2016, and Jarecki and Smerling set to serve as potential witnesses, this story is far from over.

Did you ever conceive that your interview with Durst and the investigation could lead to this confession?

Andrew Jarecki: The confession is Bob's reaction to the power of the evidence that we uncovered, so while I think it's dramatic and certainly makes for good television, for us the focus was on having found the letter and envelope that matched the 'cadaver' note which was written by the killer of Susan



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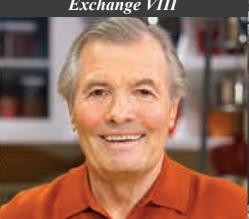
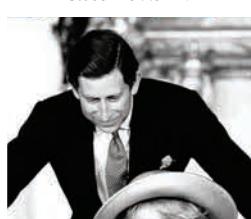
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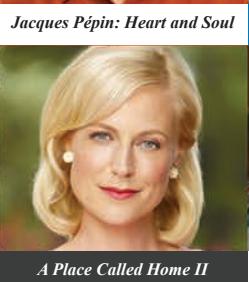
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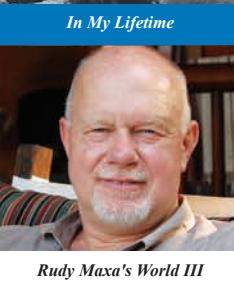
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TRAILBLAZERS / YEAR IN REVIEW

Berman... I think we did consider that, because Bob reached out to me and so he obviously had something to say, and I've always thought Bob had something of a compulsion to confess. At the time he called me, it was obvious he was filled with things he wanted to describe publicly, and Bob's style is to be very open about many things that the average person would not be open about if they were trying to protect themselves.

Some members of the doc community have questioned the presentation of your timeline and some of your re-enactments. Did you anticipate those reactions?

AJ: On balance, I thought the reaction was very strong and positive. There are always going to be people who say docs shouldn't have any re-enactments in them. Re-enactments, certainly in *The Jinx*, are blatantly stylized. I think it's appropriate for the medium and I think we're quite careful about not being misleading. With respect to the questions about when we informed the police [about the similar handwriting], we're very clear about that and very straight-forward about it: we informed the authorities about the evidence we had a couple of years before the show came out. The question – did we withhold evidence from the police in the service of having a big opening – the answer to that is no.

Marc Smerling: You make an edit in these stories to repress time, to create momentum in the storytelling, to make the story better for the audience. That's the only reason you're editing usually. There's no other reason to edit them. If the audience has the stomach for watching the film from camera start to camera finish, we would be doing that, but that's not what the audience wants. And everybody wants their doc to be seen.

As far as the re-enactments are concerned, [Errol Morris's] *The Thin Blue Line* was an amazing film and we owe a lot to it. I think you have to figure out a way to tell some of these stories – especially these historical stories – [in a way] that [audiences] can get excited about. I'm not going to say every re-enactment is okay, but I think if you're sensitive to the issues and you're sensitive to the characters, re-enactments bring the audience to a place where they can enjoy watching a doc.

What are your next steps? Will your next project follow the trial or are you looking forward to a Durst-free future?

AJ: I think we're always interested in what's happening, and we're at some level always trying to document what's happening in the case. We don't have a concrete plan at the moment but we've captured some interesting material that obviously wasn't in the series because it didn't fit or extended beyond the boundaries of the series, so it remains to be seen what we will do with it.

MS: I was thinking about where we fit in the world of the trial, and I'm not really sure what the right thing to do is yet. I can see that definitely doing nothing is an option. **Manori Ravindran**

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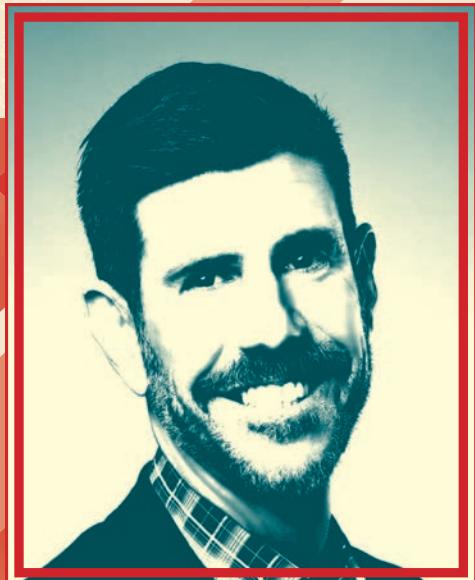
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RICH ROSS

**Group president,
Discovery Channel,
Animal Planet and
Science Channel**

“People aren’t looking to spiral down into negativity. People are asking, ‘What can you tell me that I will be inspired by?’”

A mere matter of days after beginning his tenure as Discovery Channel president, former Disney and Shine America executive Rich Ross was facing the international press at the winter TCA Tour, providing an insight into where he wanted to take the channel on the year ahead that subsequently proved remarkably accurate. At the Discovery Channel presser, he maintained that Discovery would be steering away from high-rating but controversial documentary-style scripted fare featuring mermaids and megalodons, and, under the oversight of newly appointed head of documentaries and specials and former HBO exec John Hoffman, embrace authenticity anew. As well, after commenting that Discovery Channel had become “more narrowly niche” than it needed to be, he vowed to bring programming to the fore that would appeal to a broader audience, in an effort to become “the number one TV brand for the whole family.”

Twelve months later, Discovery, under Ross, has led the charge in a global roll-out of the latest film from acclaimed documentarian Louie Psihogios, *Racing Extinction* (acquired at Sundance in 2015, again mere days after Ross and Hoffman set up shop at Discovery). And, according to Nielsen, it finished 2015 as one of the few cable nets to be up – significantly, by over 11% – over the year prior for total viewers and for the first time ever, was U.S. cable’s top non-sports network for men.

The Psihogios film rolled out on December 2 in 220 countries and territories, and racked up 11.6 million viewers in the U.S. according to Live+3 numbers from Nielsen. More major doc projects are in the works, including an airing of the acclaimed *Sherpa* from Jennifer Peedom during the upcoming ‘Elevation Week’ programming stunt.

And while *MythBusters*, one of Discovery’s longest-running series, will be signing off after its final season in 2016, “We will be returning all our hit series back with ratings above where they were before,” Ross maintains.

Now serving as a group president with the flagship channel as well as Animal Planet and Science Channel under his watch, Ross says he’s “bullish” about the chances for the two other nets to mirror Discovery’s growth. While scripted programs remain an area of interest, with two – *Harley and the Davidsons* and *Manifesto* – on the way for early 2016, Ross says

such projects will have to “connect with our brand and our audience.”

You’ve just come off the global rollout for *Racing Extinction*. Given that it was the first major documentary project that typifies Discovery’s, and your, interest in doc projects that make an impact, what are your thoughts about how it all went?

I’m thrilled, because people had come to believe that doing good does not mean doing well. Seeing the tens of millions of people who’ve now seen it and the impressions from all around the world – it gave me pause because it’s one thing to think about it but it’s another thing to actually see it happen.

Is it fair to say that this renewed interest in big feature docs is in some way inspired by the aggressive moves in the genre from competitors like Netflix or HBO?

What we recognized from the beginning and I felt very strongly about was that only we can walk in the door to Louie Psihogios and say ‘We’ll air this in 220 countries in one night.’ Everybody else has versions or pieces of our strategy, but we knew that if you turned on Discovery in any one of 220 countries and territories on that night in December, you were going to see *Racing Extinction*.

Many in the industry took notice when you said you would push for Discovery content to retain a sense of authenticity. Is that a trend you see continuing in 2016?

Having seen what happened with *Naked and Afraid XL* [the top unscripted freshman series of the year], it’s a combination of aspirational and authentic and if anything, those two As are the big difference. People aren’t looking to spiral down into negativity – we have enough of that in our world. People are asking, ‘What can you tell me that I will be inspired by?’ So I think that combination is very vital, and commercially viable. **Barry Walsh**

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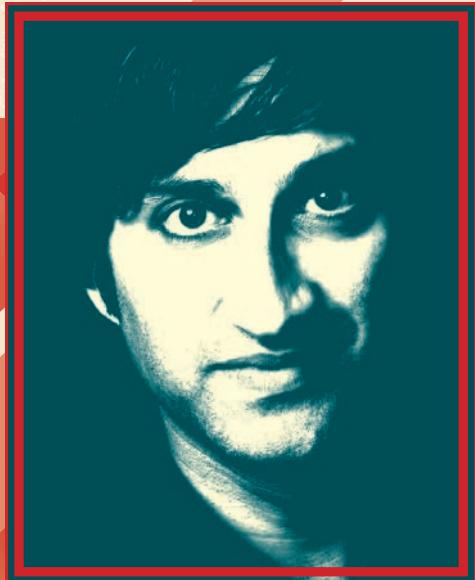
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ASIF KAPADIA

Filmmaker

When Asif Kapadia began working on a documentary about Amy Winehouse in 2012, few people had a good opinion of the troubled British singer, who had passed a year prior. “Why the hell would you want to make a film about a junkie?” the *Senna* director remembers being asked. Despite an initial lack of visuals, Kapadia eventually won the trust of Winehouse’s inner circle, and secured everything from Skype screen caps to voicemails left by the singer. He hoped Amy would be the rare breed of archival doc set firmly in the present.

“Archive doesn’t have to be black and white footage,” says the director, who’d never made a documentary before his BAFTA Award-nominated doc about race car driver Ayrton Senna. “It can be about something that happened yesterday; it’s just whether or not it gives you a more honest way in to tell the story than any other way of doing it.”

The director hoped, too, that a contemporary subject would get more young people into the theaters to watch a documentary. “The idea is to make films in such a way that they can choose to see that franchise movie that cost \$200 million or they could go and see *Amy*,” he notes. And see *Amy* they did. In the UK, the film is the highest-grossing British documentary of all time, and was recently shortlisted for the Best Documentary Feature Oscar.

Prior to *Senna*, how much work had you done in archive?

Hardly anything. My background previously was in writing and directing fiction films. The way *Senna* was originally set up before I started was 40 minutes of archive, 40 minutes of talking head interviews, 10 minutes miscellaneous. And I said we didn’t need 40 minutes of interviews, we can take that budget and put it into the archive. It was a gut feeling and I think it came also from the fact that I made narrative films and I know how to tell the story with pictures. My instinct has never been, as a filmmaker, to start with a talking head interview and find footage to cover it over. I work the other way: I start with the footage and then think, ‘Where do I need to hear a voice?’

Who are your influences in documentary, particularly among archive-focused directors?

I’m a sports fan, so when I did *Senna*, one film that influenced me was Leon Gast’s *When We Were Kings*. Because I want to see Ali being Muhammad Ali, I don’t want an actor pretending to be Muhammad Ali.

Raging Bull was as much an influence at times with *Senna* because it’s a film about a boxer, but how many fights can you actually show where they have seven or eight key moments and each one is unique? With *Senna*, there were only seven or eight races and each race has to be visually different and has to move the narrative on, and it was the same with Amy’s performances. You can only have a set number of songs.

“Archive doesn’t have to be black and white footage. It can be about something that happened yesterday.”

The doc feels so contemporary, particularly with its use of Skype and old voicemails. How much thought went into using these mediums?

Archive can make me feel like these are things that happened in the past. *Senna* was like that – the story took place 15, 20 years ago from when we made the film. *Amy* is a story about something that happened almost yesterday. The archive process and the audio interviews gave us the opportunity to tell this story about London, art, creativity, the media, success and fame. But it’s also about bulimia, drink and addiction, and falling in love. It’s very much about the here and now. **MR**

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NOMIN CHINBAT

CEO, Mongol TV

028

In the four years since taking the reins as CEO of Mongol TV, Nomin Chinbat has shown that Mongolia's got talent, and some tenacity, too. For years, the television market in the East Asian country of just three million has been saturated with about 150 channels competing for viewership – often turning to piracy to broadcast top programming they can't otherwise afford.

Chinbat has long pushed for legitimate acquisitions in order to create an even playing ground for all broadcasters, and in 2014 she helped to launch the Mongol TV Forum to discuss these issues and attract international suppliers to the country. The latter crusade paid off for Chinbat in a big way this year when Mongol TV launched a localized format of *Got Talent*, after a multi-season deal inked with producers Syco Entertainment and FremantleMedia last December.

Following a 13-week run that ended in early December, *Mongolia's Got Talent* smashed the country's ratings record by earning

90% of the market share. Production is now underway for a Mongolian *Gogglebox*, set to air next March, and Chinbat is busy preparing for the third annual Mongol TV Forum in February.

You've mentioned in the past that it could be "all hands on deck" at Mongol TV to produce a show such as *Got Talent*. How did the production go?

We're not a big station, the country is small and the talent pool for tradespeople isn't as big as for any other country, so we always have to pull in our own talent within the station. Everybody from our station – from different productions – pitched in and we were able to push it on to the exact air time and it went on without any glitches.

I imagine *Gogglebox* will be a little less intense for you?

After you've done *Got Talent*, you feel like you can do anything else.

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A photograph of four people wearing helmets and riding small, colorful toy cars (black, pink, green) on a dirt path in a forest. The text 'CONNECTING CONTENT, BRANDS AND AUDIENCE.' is overlaid in the bottom right corner of the image.

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“I never realized how a TV program can change the country’s view of something or unite the country. *Mongolia’s Got Talent* has brought something bright into people’s lives and united the country.”

In the future, how will you handle acquiring more international formats?

We've now learned how to deal with the larger formats, and how much capacity and human resources we need, so we're looking to produce about four formats – one large, one medium, one small and one kids' format – a year.

In what ways has the Mongol TV Forum grown since 2014?

As a station, we kind of thought that being on your own and pushing the content rights or format rights and acquiring content on your own wasn't working as well as it should be. We were competing on unfair ground and we were buying when others are pirating. If the copyright laws were followed, I saw a way out

of unnecessary complications, so that's why we started the [Forum].

It started a dialog on copyright, and because of it a lot of people got to know international suppliers and they actually started communicating. Some stations didn't have a way in to the international market, so they started to [learn]. This year, we're really hoping to push people to actually try to find the proper format instead of stealing formats. Before, we were more into [developing] content, but now we think formats are the next [step] because we've shown that *Got Talent* can be successful.

Do you see a reduction in piracy among other broadcasters?

Yes, because – first of all – at least people are

aware now that they're pirating. Secondly, larger or bigger networks are more cautious about pirating and they're starting to acquire. They still have some piracy but it's not as big [an issue] as it used to be.

What are you most proud of from this past year?

I think I never realized how a TV program can change the country's view of something or unite the country. With *Mongolia's Got Talent*, I see that Mongolia is in a crisis and everybody's having a very difficult time but this [show] has brought something bright into people's lives and united the country, which is amazing. **MR**

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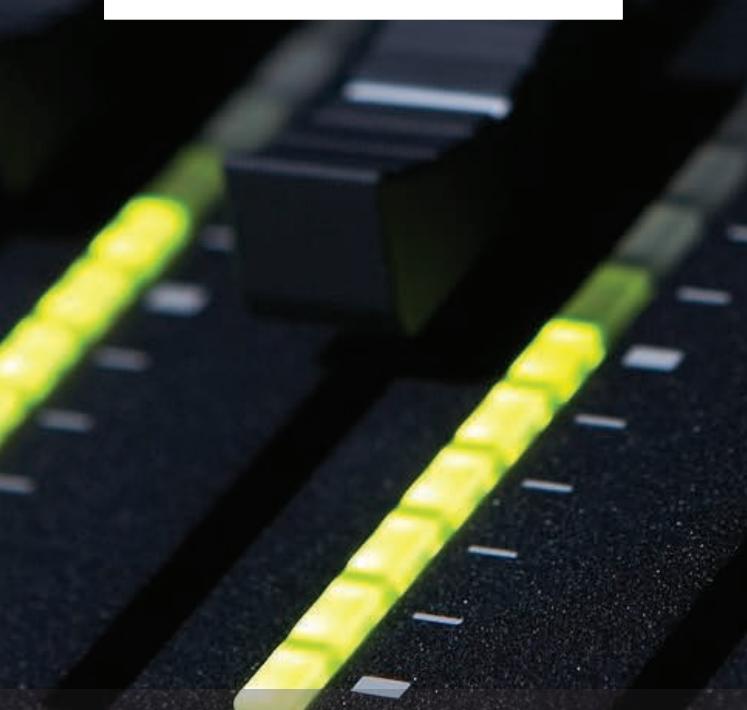
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TRAILBLAZERS / YEAR IN REVIEW



JAMES MILWARD

Executive producer and founder, Secret Location

James Milward doesn't claim to have all the answers to the world of digital, or even some. The term 'digital,' he says, is becoming obsolete, and with so many verticals at play, the industry is no closer than it was 10 years ago to cracking the model for how it's going to work. But if anyone is having success navigating the plethora of unknowns, it's Milward and his Toronto- and Los Angeles-based content studio Secret Location, which works in interactive docs, app development and award-winning virtual reality (VR), among other projects.

The Entertainment One-backed company in September picked up the first-ever Emmy Award presented to a virtual reality project for *Sleepy Hollow: VR Experience*, which won a Creative Arts Emmy for user experience and visual design. Weeks later, it collaborated with PBS' investigative journalism strand 'Frontline' for the latter's first VR documentary, *Ebola Outbreak: A Virtual Journey*, and in October, Secret Location officially signed with United Talent Agency.

Milward modestly points out that awards serve as validation but aren't a "fundamental game-changer." That may be, but only because Secret Location is changing the game all on its own. A year ago, the company – which now has about 60 projects on the go at any given time – had a VR output of about 5%. Now, almost 12 months since signing with Chris Milk's VR content studio VRSE. Works, about half of the company's projects are in VR.

A 'Secret' to success? Avoid a specific platform, and be ubiquitous. "It's in our best interest, in terms of our interest and experience, to be really focused on all of these places you can tell the best stories," Milward offers.

There are, increasingly, a lot of players entering VR. Where does Secret Location fit into this landscape?

VR is a very ripe platform for immersive storytelling, and it's something we've been doing on a number of different platforms as they become available to us. We've always been figuring out how story and character and the audience interact together. Where that plays in VR is we have a completely immersive environment, 360 degrees, 3D, and the more sophisticated it can be, it can actually have agency and the ability to interact and affect that story. We're bringing all our experience to try and create those meaningful stories, some of which we'll have a more specific hand in owning the content or IP for, and some we'll help facilitate for partners and clients.

What can we expect to see from VR storytelling in the non-fiction realm?

I think tech and pipelines get more and more refined, the more investment and time goes by. I think we'll see more and more players in the tech and software markets, more and more people trying to define a technological process, and then we'll see

more and more films and narratives get made – a lot of which will be rough and won't be good, and some of which will be better than others. And as we see those evolutionary stories start to be developed, people will start to steal and repeat and take the best of what they see and evolve the format further, just as with every cinematic medium.

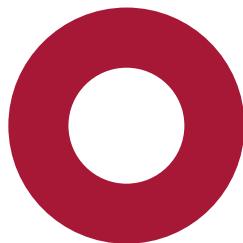
Most people put on VR and it wouldn't matter what it was, they just have their mind blown that it could be 360 degrees. But the next level of that is needing content and engagement that comes at a much more critical level, where people can evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of it.

What are some of your upcoming projects?

We're doing an interactive doc about the world's largest windfarm which is being built by GE. We were just in China shooting that doc in VR – that's with VRSE. We just finished this project with [actor Edward Norton's charity] CrowdRise, with VRSE as well. Then, we are working on another series of projects with 'Frontline' in 360-degree video and VR. It's a big initiative with them. And we have some larger projects combining VR with traditional media. **MR**

"As we see evolutionary stories start to be developed, people will steal and repeat, and take the best of what they see and evolve the format further, as with every cinematic medium."

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

A look at the year's top trends, as well as the stories that will carry into 2016, and perhaps beyond.

SVOD, FTW

The online video-streaming market became increasingly crowded in 2015. The year saw a number of key players advancing into the digital space in a bid to steal away the 46.4% market share currently held by SVOD giant Netflix, which continued undeterred in its aggressive global expansion with the hopes of reaching nearly 200 markets by the end of 2016.

Amazon Prime was one of the biggest noisemakers of the year, having finally thrown its hat in as a serious factual player by signing the faces behind the world's most widely watched factual program – former *Top Gear* presenters Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May – to a three-year contract. In October, the nascent content platform also picked up the 10-part fashion-focused docuseries *The Fashion Fund* from Condé Nast Entertainment. The deal is the second with CNE, currently working with Alex Gibney's Jigsaw Productions on the docuseries *The New Yorker Presents*.

In March, Discovery Channel founder and former chairman John Hendricks launched CuriosityStream, the world's first factual SVOD platform, across the U.S. before entering the international arena in September. Headed by Elizabeth Hendricks North, the service currently provides its subscriber base with approximately 1,000 original and licensed titles concerning science, natural history, technology and history, including the Mo Rocca-hosted *Innovation Nation*; the 11-part astronomy series *Destination Pluto*; and the five-part, technology-focused *Next World*. In



December, CuriosityStream partnered with SVOD service Amazon Prime to be offered as an "add-on" subscription service.

Other factual SVOD movers and shakers included Smithsonian Networks, who launched Smithsonian Earth in mid-November, offering original nature and wildlife content in high definition and Ultra HD/4K resolution; Netherlands-based TERN International, which unveiled its Ultra HD/4K channel Insight at MIPCOM; and Eureka Media-owned platform AeroCinema, which is set to launch in March and promises more than 400 rare aviation features, documentaries and profiles in HD and 4K.

Daniele Alcinii

Discovery Channel founder John Hendricks unveiled factual SVOD service CuriosityStream (pictured: *Big Picture Earth*)



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UNEASE IN THE UK

The production landscape in the UK saw the beginnings of a potential major shift with the announcement of the formation of BBC Studios, an independent production division proposed for the BBC that would allow in-house producers to create programming for rival and international networks, and possibly reduce production quotas. Peter Salmon, former BBC England director, was named director of the Studios division, and in mid-December, the Beeb and British indie producer association Pact arrived at an agreement for a policy framework that includes the tender of 40% of in-house programming to external producers by 2018.

The BBC saw an executive shake-up in October, with director of television Danny Cohen announcing his departure from the UK pubcaster to pursue a "new leadership challenge." Mark Linsey, previously controller of entertainment commissioning, moved into the role on an interim basis.

More feathers ruffled in September when UK culture secretary John Whittingdale, during a keynote speech at the RTS Cambridge Convention, casually mentioned that broadcast regulator Ofcom would be conducting "a health-check of the Terms of Trade regulations." Pact argued that such a move could create instability "which can only damage investment and growth."

Added to the mix was news that broke in September via a leaked government document, which posited options for a potential sale of Channel 4. Speculation in the British press has such companies as Discovery Communications and BT potentially in the buyer's ring. **Barry Walsh**



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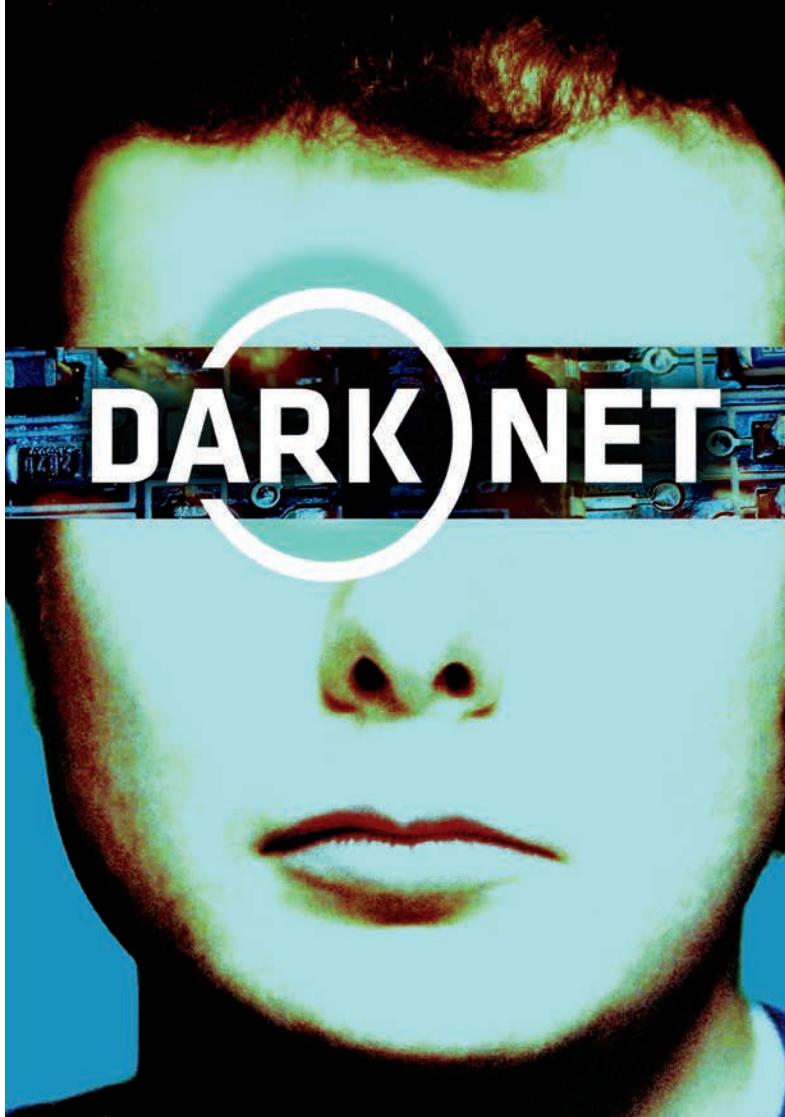
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Educating Essex producers Twofour Group were acquired by ITV in just one of many M&A deals in 2015.

SIZZLING STAKES AND DEALS APLENTY

Mergers, acquisitions and the snapping up of stakes continued relatively unabated in 2015, with many of the deals having a distinctly digital edge to them.

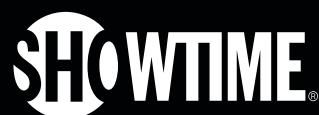
The Vice/A+E Networks joint venture was finally confirmed in November, with news of the early 2016 launch of Viceland, a 24-hour channel that will be entirely programmed by the Vice team. H2, the A+E brand that is making way for Viceland, will continue to be carried internationally. Vice also announced a Canadian Viceland channel through its tie-up with Rogers Communications, also slated for an early 2016 launch, and CEO Shane Smith revealed to the UK press plans for more channel deals in the UK and Europe. Meanwhile, Disney upped its stake in the millennial brand, and HBO extended its content deal with Smith and his team for another four years, into 2018.

ITV continued on the acquisition path by snapping up format powerhouse Talpa Media for US\$531.68 million (which led to the commercial broadcaster also acquiring Talpa's *The Voice UK* from 2017), Twofour Group for an initial \$86.58 million, and a minority share of YouTube network Channel Mum.

American indie Pilgrim Studios, the shop behind Discovery's *Fast 'n' Loud* and Syfy's *Ghost Hunters*, entered into a "strategic investment" with Lionsgate, with the latter reportedly taking a majority stake in Craig Piligian's prodco.

Global network groups also continued to snap up regional networks, with Scripps finalizing its acquisition of TVN Poland in July, ITV purchasing the television assets of Northern Ireland's UTV, and Discovery moving from a controlling stake into full ownership of Eurosport. Discovery and Eurosport also splashed out big bucks (approximately 1.44 billion of them) for an exclusive European multi-platform broadcast and distribution deal for four Olympic Games between 2018 and 2024. **BW**

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History's Alone, from Leftfield Pictures, armed participants with GoPros to capture their isolated experiences in the wild.

SELF-SHOT SUCCESSES

Equipped with GoPros and tripods of their own, the unscripted stars of 2015 took reality television into their own hands. Production units weren't suddenly out of the picture, nor were these programs cheaper to make; producers' roles were simply redefined – with a focus on pre- and post-production support – in a bid to boost authenticity for viewers.

History's *Alone*, produced by Leftfield Pictures, found 10 survivalists filming their isolated experiences on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The program debuted in June to high ratings and in August was greenlit for a second season airing this year.

Other adventure-themed shows – a genre popular for self-shot methods – included the Bear Grylls-fronted *The Island* from Endemol Shine and Bear Grylls Ventures for NBC, which was 95% self-shot by its 14-member cast, and *100 Miles from Nowhere* from Renegade83 for Animal Planet, in which three adventurers filmed their 100-mile journeys to destinations in North, South and Central America. In December, Animal

Planet also premiered the self-shot special *Melting: Last Race to the Pole* from High Noon Entertainment, which followed two explorers traveling 480 miles to reach the North Pole in 48 days.

Outside of the adventure space, March saw the debut of AOL's first long-form docuseries, *Connected*, while June marked the premiere of Pivot's critically acclaimed *The Secret Lives of Americans*, which has been greenlit for a 20-episode second season airing next year. While the U.S. adaptation of the Armoza Formats-produced *Connected* found six New Yorkers documenting their lives using hand-held camcorders, the tactic was also used in Pivot's *The Secret Lives of Americans*, which featured participants using camcorders, phones and laptops to film themselves revealing their biggest secrets to loved ones. **Manori Ravindran**

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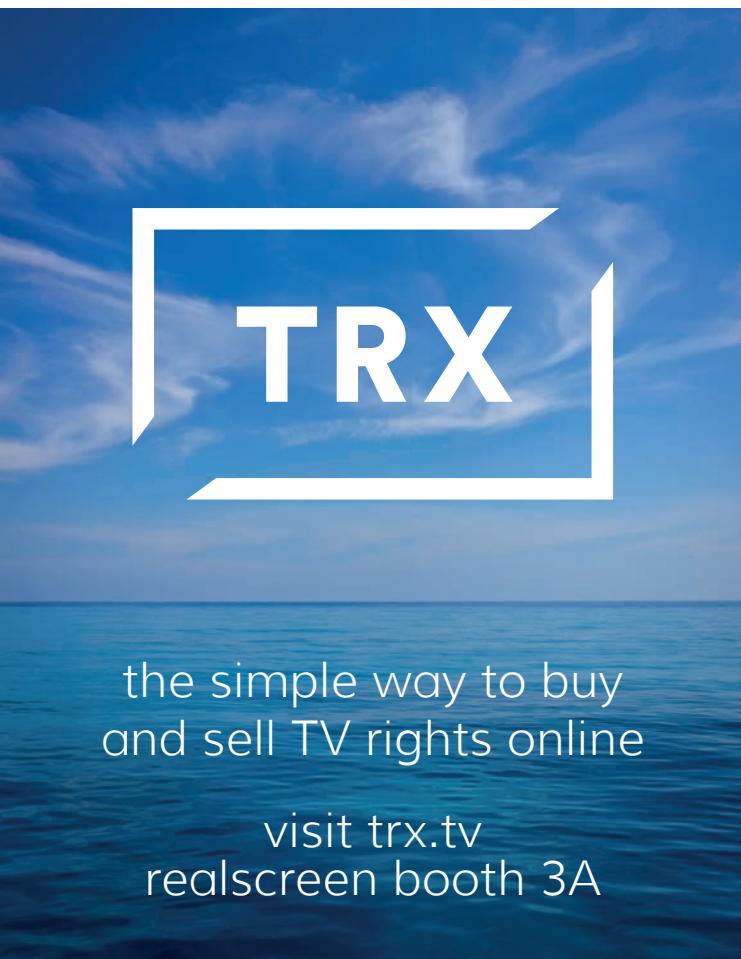
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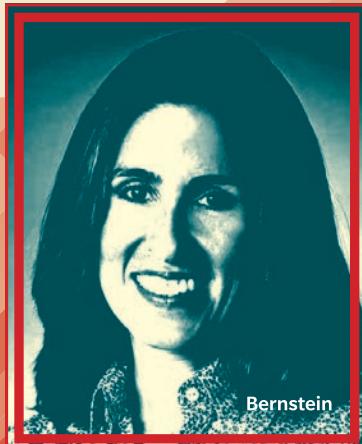
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MORE SCRIPTED ON CABLE

Despite the sentiment put forward by FX Networks CEO John Landgraf that "there's too much television" vying for eyeballs, cable nets predominantly known for non-fiction and unscripted continued making bids in the space.

A+E Networks announced plans to develop and produce, through A+E Studios, two scripted takes on literary and television classics slated to air across the A&E, History and Lifetime networks in 2016, including a four-part, eight-hour remake of the iconic 1977 miniseries *Roots* with The Wolper Organization. A+E also took on Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, produced in partnership with The Weinstein Company, BBC Cymru Wales and BBC Worldwide/Lookout Point. The four-week event began airing on January 18.

National Geographic Channel, meanwhile, remained committed to its scripted efforts by appointing Carolyn Bernstein as executive VP and head of global scripted development and production. Its *Saints and Strangers*, aired over American Thanksgiving, depicted early encounters between European pilgrims and Native Americans. For 2016, Nat Geo, which first ventured into the scripted space in 2013 through its *Killing* franchise, has *Last Men Out* from Tom Fontana and

Barry Levinson on the way, as well as *In Harm's Way* with Mark Gordon and ABC Signature Studios.

A few networks that recently tested the scripted waters waded deeper. After seeing *The Royals* premiere to an average of 2.19 million viewers in March, entertainment channel E! picked up its second scripted commission in *The Arrangement* from *Mad Men* producer Jonathan Abrahams, while sister NBCU cable net Bravo announced three scripted series in April – *My So-Called Wife*, *White Collar Wives* and the miniseries *All that Glitters*.

TruTV renewed its comedy series *Those Who Can't* for a second season ahead of its February 11 premiere. The net also ordered three additional pilot series, including *Shady Neighbors* from Dean Lorey and 3 Arts Entertainment; an untitled medical comedy from comedian Tom Segura; and a dark comedy vigilante series from YouTube celeb Melissa Hunter.

Meanwhile, AMC picked up the motorcycle travelog *Ride with Norman Reedus*, featuring the *Walking Dead* star. That doesn't signal a full move back into factual for AMC, however, with a spokesperson telling *realscreen* that it was simply "looking for unscripted programs that compliment our scripted shows." DA

037

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Jazz Jennings (second from right) is the focal point of TLC's *I Am Jazz*.

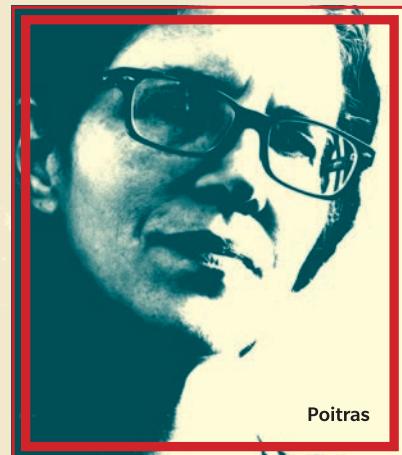
UNSCRIPTED TAKES ON TRANS STORIES

In North America, the LGBT community scored a significant win in the political sphere with the wider recognition of marriage equality, but television programs also helped thrust a positive agenda forward. Leading the push for transgender visibility was Bumim/Murray Productions' *I Am Cait*, which follows Caitlyn Jenner as she settles into transgender life. The series premiered to an audience of 2.7 million live-plus-same-day viewers, according to Nielsen. Despite declining numbers that eventually fell to 1.26 million viewers on its season finale, E! renewed the series for a second season in October. It has been widely lauded for the role it's played in educating the public on trans issues through continued exposure in 153 countries and 24 languages.

The year's surge in trans-centric obs-docs arose in the midst of activism campaigns aimed at exposing violence and discrimination. April saw Discovery Life launch the five-part series *New Girls on the Block*, offering a transformative look into the lives of a group of trans women

as they navigate daily struggles and successes in Kansas City, Missouri. Sister net TLC, meanwhile, entered into the mix with *I Am Jazz* from This Is Just A Test. The 11-episode series, which premiered in July to modest ratings (1.36 million), chronicles the life of 15-year-old Jazz Jennings, a transgender teen activist and YouTube personality, as she entered high school and grappled with health issues. The Discovery Communications-owned net in December signed on for an eight-episode sophomore season of the series.

ABC Family, which has since rebranded to Freeform as part of an overall plan to double the amount of original programming the network commissions over the next four years, attempted to set itself apart from the aforementioned networks with *Becoming Us*, which followed 17-year-old Ben Lehwald's experiences as his father transitioned from Charlie to Carly. However, the network has yet to make an official announcement on the possibility of a return for the Ryan Seacrest Productions-made series. **DA**



DOC SHORTS SCALE UP

Whether you're a novice director looking to make a calling card project, a seasoned filmmaker testing the waters for a feature, or a media organization exploring digital video, few mediums are as useful as the documentary short.

Within the non-fiction realm, outlets such as *The New York Times*' 'Op-Docs' division have expanded the boundaries of short storytelling with such award-winning commissions as *Notes on Blindness*, while *The Guardian*'s documentary arm has made a concerted push into international shorts with initiatives such as Sheffield Doc/Fest's 'The Guardian Documentaries Pitch' this past June.

The greatest boon to the doc short, however, might just be the Laura Poitras-helmed digital documentary unit, Field of Vision. Launched in October with co-creators Charlotte Cook and AJ Schnack, the filmmaker-driven project pairs veteran and emerging doc makers with ongoing news stories. Formed in collaboration with news site *The Intercept* and First Look Media, Field of Vision aims to produce 40 to 50 original episodic and individual films per year, specializing in visual journalism.

In December the unit launched a four-part docuseries titled *#ThisIsACoup*, on the 2015 confrontation between Greece and the European Union, and two FOV-produced shorts – Michael Palmieri and Donal Mosher's *Peace in the Valley* and Schnack's *Speaking is Difficult* – will premiere at the Sundance Film Festival this month.

"[We're interested in] seeing filmmakers and artists play with ideas that maybe don't fit a feature or the other work that they're doing, but they're really interested in," Cook told *realscreen* last September. "Every filmmaker I've ever spoken to has always said, 'I'm really interested in this but it's not something I'd do as a feature.'"

In 2016, keep an eye on Sheffield Doc/Fest and the Just So Film Fund's online 'Postcards' platform, which aims to be a dedicated home for online doc shorts. **MR**

*Unscripted
doesn't mean
unoriginal.*



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PREMIUM POWER PLAYS

In January, shortly after new Discovery Channel president Rich Ross took office, the newly anointed topper made headlines with his proclamation that the network would be eschewing the loud and high-rating “docufiction” template as seen in *Megalodon: The Monster Shark Lives* and *Mermaids: The Body Found*. Instead, the aim was now to gravitate towards a more authentic approach to content. Shortly thereafter, Discovery announced its acquisition of Louie Psihogios’ *Racing Extinction* at Sundance and revealed plans for a global airing, across its 220 countries and territories worldwide.

Meanwhile, National Geographic Channel (NGC) followed up its huge success with the 2014 reboot of *Cosmos* with announcements of more premium limited series, including ‘Breakthrough.’ Exec produced by Brian Grazer and Ron Howard, the six-part anthology series was co-developed with global brand GE, and featured a different Hollywood luminary in the director’s chair for each installment. Prior to its November premiere, NGC CEO Courtney Monroe told *realscreen* the move towards premium content was a vital component of Nat Geo’s strategy going forward.

“Because Nat Geo is about quality and it’s about science and adventure and exploration, my vision is this channel lives up to the brand by creating big, event-driven TV that is, quite frankly, worthy of the Nat Geo brand,” she said.

While some pundits frame cable’s rush for the A-listers and premium content as a move to counter the salvo of buzzworthy, big budget content from such players as HBO and Netflix, it’s

probably more appropriate to view it as a bid to cut through the clutter of increasingly fragmented media. And while other cable networks are approaching premium through the scripted arena (see A+E’s upcoming reboot of *Roots*), in the year ahead, it’ll be worth keeping an eye out to see what other nets embrace the “bigger, better, fewer” philosophy, and the impact it will have on series commissions. **BW**

Discovery’s global roll-out of Louie Psihogios’ *Racing Extinction* was one of the major doc events on television this year.



AU REVOIR, IDOL

As the saying goes, all good things must come to an end. And so it went in May, when Fox announced the cancellation of *American Idol* during an upfront presentation, and set a series finale for the end of the forthcoming season. The news might not have come as a surprise to the industry observers who’ve been noting the program’s sliding ratings for several seasons, but *Idol*’s demise in the U.S. – soon followed

by the cancellation of *America’s Next Top Model* after 22 seasons of “smizing” – still signaled the end of an era for American television, which some viewers have come to expect in primetime viewing, even if they stopped tuning in years ago.

In a September *realscreen* feature, teams behind *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race*, among others, discussed how they keep their formats

fresh. Mark Burnett explained that his “letter” to the audience contains a different message each season, while *The Amazing Race* creator Bertram van Munster pointed out the Race’s far-flung locations are pretty compelling on their own, regardless of seasonal twists. Most intriguing of all, several producers agreed that the end of *Idol* wasn’t exactly ringing alarm bells for reality producers, and that *American Idol* might be down, but it might not be out.

“What tends to happen with really great formats where there’s a built-in audience is that the format will go off-air for a year or maybe three years, but it will come back,” said Sony Pictures Television’s Jane Dockery, who oversees such formats as *Dragon’s Den* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*.

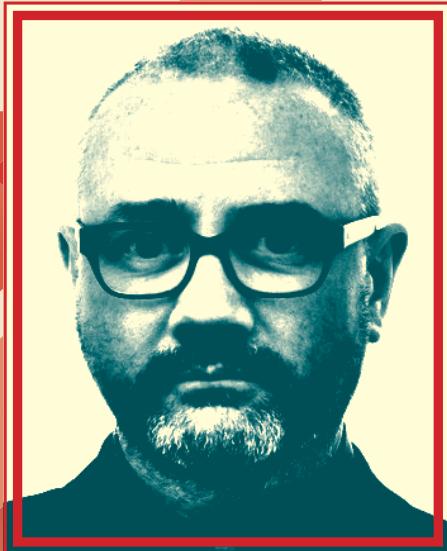
So what will the landscape look like in the U.S. for legacy formats in a post-*American Idol* world? Expect to see *The Voice* – which in September picked up its second Emmy award for outstanding reality competition – stay on top, while formats such as *Big Brother* and *Survivor* increase their currency with buzzy (and diverse!) twists, such as transgender house-guests and audience-voted cast members. **MR**



American Idol will bid adieu after this year’s season.

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

Now that 2015 is done and dusted, we've asked members of the non-fiction and unscripted industry to reveal their takes on the year that was.



SIMON KILMURRY
Executive director,
International Documentary
Association

The IDA's Simon Kilmurry says *The Look of Silence* will be remembered for years to come.

My favorite feature documentary of 2015 was:

Gosh, that is so hard in such a strong year! If pushed I would say *The Look of Silence*. But in any other year I could easily pick *Amy*, *Listen to Me Marlon*, *Heart of a Dog*, *The Black Panthers*, *Something Better to Come* ... and the list goes on.

I never thought they'd make a program about:

A hermit family of boys living on New York's Lower East Side who amuse themselves by acting out movies (*The Wolfpack*).

The program/series/doc people will be talking about in five years is:

Series: *The Jinx*; Doc: *The Look of Silence*.

In 18 months, no one will be talking about:

Donald Trump (I live in hope!).

The best factual content I've seen online this year was:

Chef's Table. It is dangerously addictive, and it's unfair to make me sit up all night watching it.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Discovery getting back in the game in a big way.

The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Same old, same old – \$\$. A resource that filmmakers still have to struggle too hard to get.

The idea I wish I thought of was:

Cardboard VR goggles.

If 2015 taught me one thing it was:

Change is hard, change is good. (Wait, that's two things...)

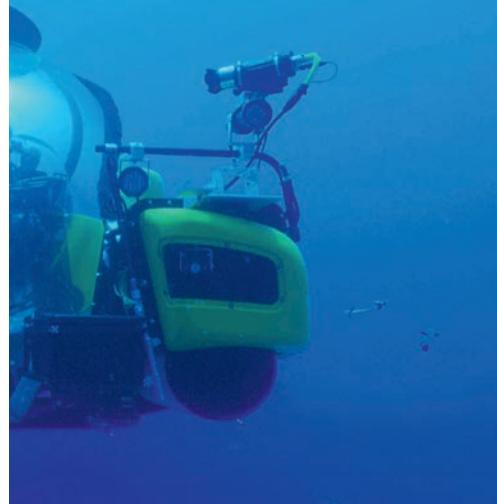
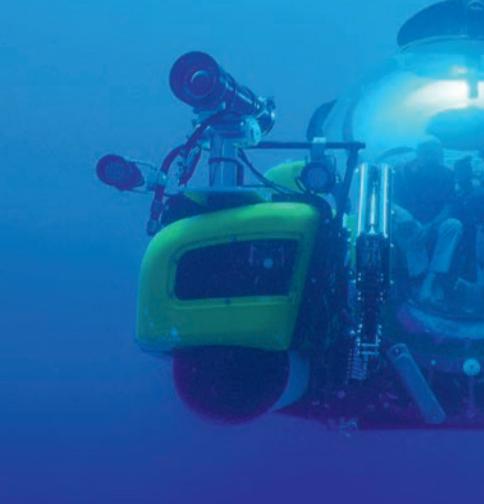
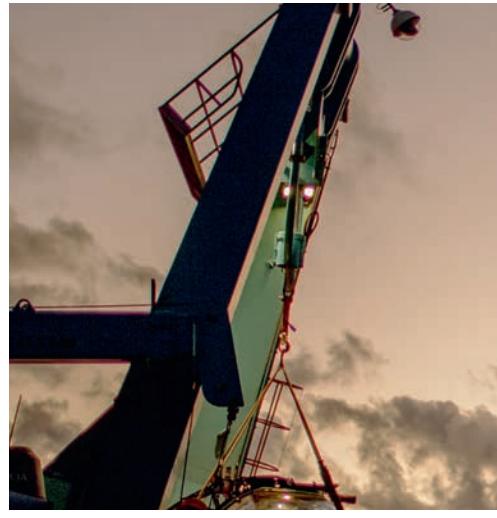
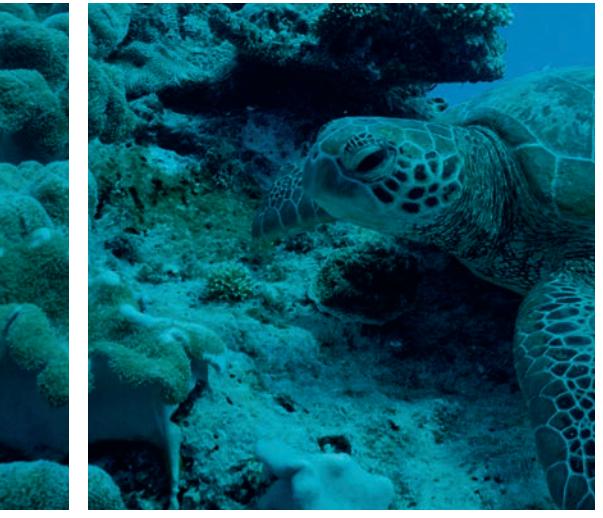
The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2016 is:

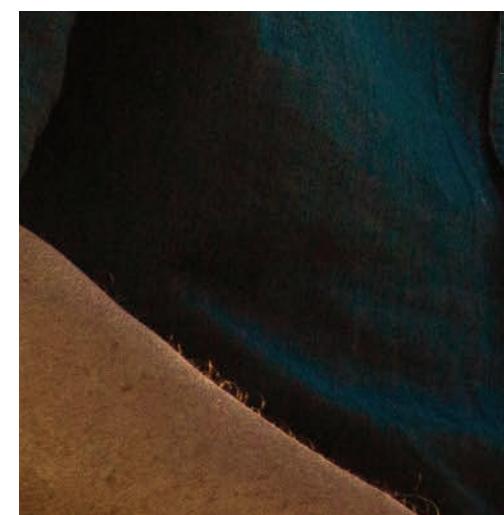
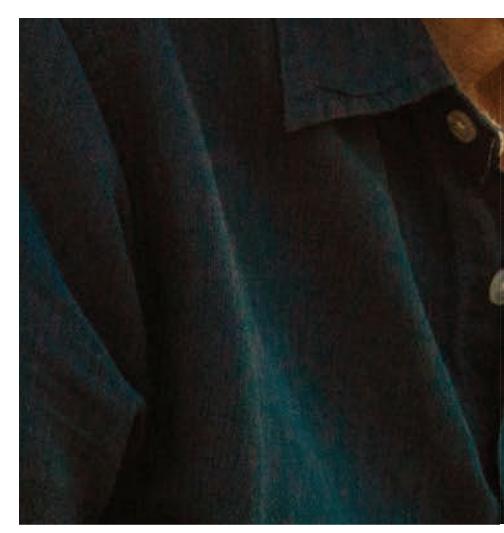
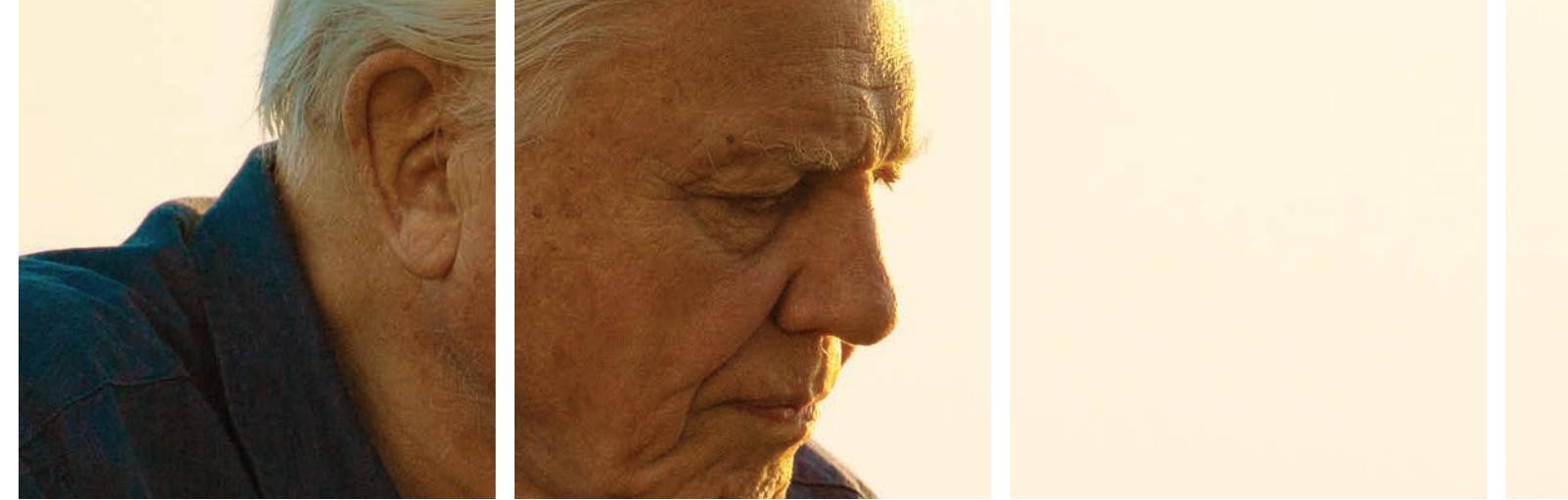
Transmedia.

My New Year's resolution for 2016 is:

Keep one day a week completely free from meetings, phone calls and email – for more thinking and writing.







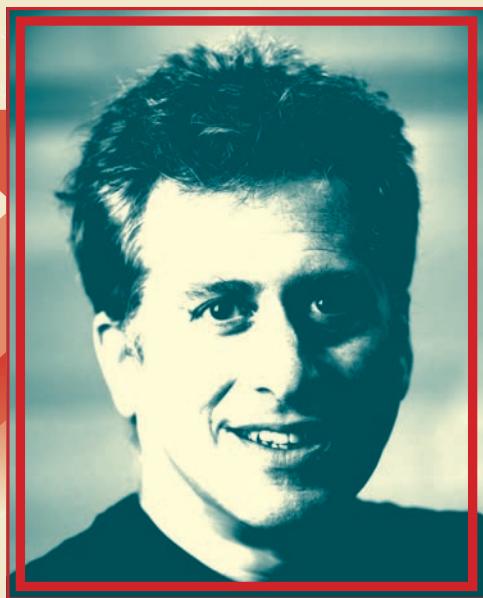
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BRUCE DAVID KLEIN

**President, executive producer,
Atlas Media Corp.**

My favorite factual series of 2015 was:

The Jinx.

I never thought they'd make a program about:

A male Olympic superstar transforming into a woman.

The doc people will be talking about in five years is:

Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck.

In 18 months, no one will be talking about:

The Apple watch.

The best factual content I've seen online this year was:

Not to disparage the value of online content, but of the thousands of videos I've seen — many of which were fun, informative, entertaining, and creative — I can't remember a single one.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The amazing growth of the Non-Fiction Producers Association (NPA) — which is now well positioned to actually address industry challenges. [Atlas Media Corp is a member of the NPA]

The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

Disruption has come home to roost — leading to lower budgets, smaller orders and fewer greenlights industry-wide.

The idea I wish I thought of was:

Snapchat.

The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

A breakthrough insight into our digital strategy that I expect to help transform that part of our business.

If 2015 taught me one thing it was:

The traditional TV model is dying, faster than we thought... But in the end, it will not completely die.

The buzzword I don't want to hear in 2016 is:

Premium.

My New Year's resolution for 2016 is:

To see the Broadway musical *Hamilton* a few more times.

Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck was Bruce David Klein's top doc of 2015.



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CAN'T

BILLY ON
THE STREET

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JOKERS

THE CARBONARO
EFFECT

HACK MY
LIFE

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KATE BEAL
CEO, Woodcut Media

My favorite factual program of 2015 was:

Reggie Yates: Extreme Russia (BBC3).

Honest, authentic and gripping journalism.

I never thought they'd make a program about:

Katie Hopkins gaining two stone in weight and then losing it again. (TLC)

The program or doc people will be talking about in five years is:

Amy.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

4K becoming more accessible within the non-scripted world, with prices coming down to make it affordable for the non-scripted budget. The real world can look even more wonderful!

The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The review of the Terms of Trade and the discussions about selling Channel 4 in the UK. It is vital these systems remain in place to ensure creativity in the UK industry – and crucial for the viability of the independent production community from a business perspective.

The idea I wish I thought of was:

T Rex Autopsy.

The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

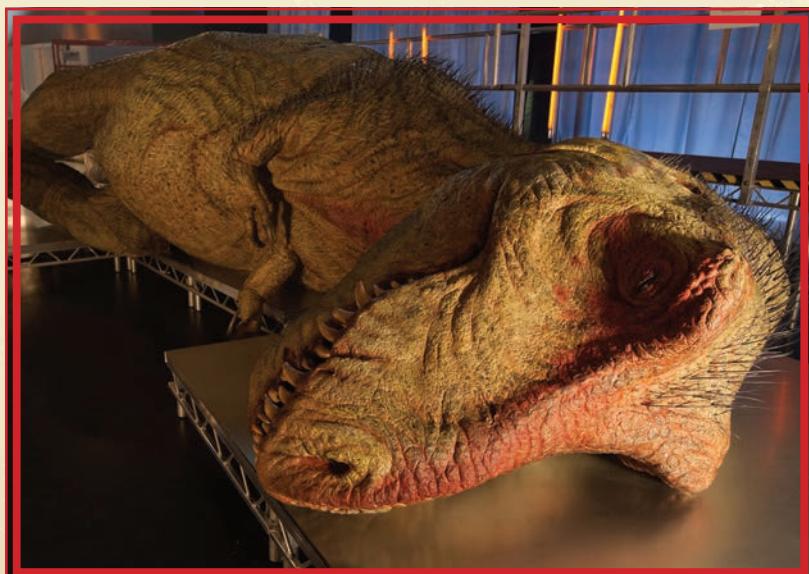
Combat Trains.

If 2015 taught me one thing it was:

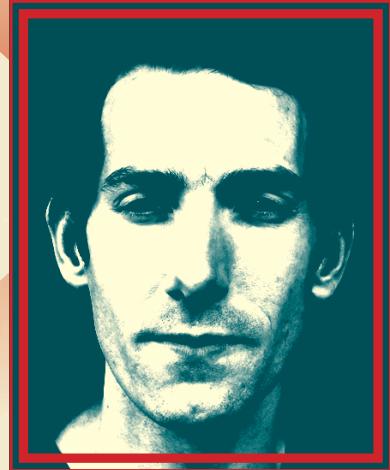
To enjoy the ride and think big.

My New Year's resolution for 2016 is:

To say 'no' occasionally.



T Rex Autopsy was a programming idea from 2015 that Woodcut Media's Kate Beal was envious of.



DANIEL CANTAGALLO
Manager, sales and operations, Cargo Films and Releasing

My favorite feature documentary of 2015 was:

Russian Woodpecker; Olmo and The Seagull (runner-up).

I never thought they'd make a program about:

The Secret Lives of Four-Year-Olds.

The series and doc people will be talking about in five years is:

The Jinx (series); The Look of Silence (doc).

In 18 months, no one will be talking about:

What they were talking about 18 months before.

The best factual content I've seen online this year was: Field of Vision short films.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The documentary form embraced by more people.

The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

More branded content and celebrity fluff masquerading as documentary.

The idea I wish I thought of was:

The Secret Lives of Four-Year-Olds.

The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

Took a vacation. Near a mountain. With no Internet access.

If 2015 taught me one thing it was:

In the age of "transparency", cultivate a secret.

The buzzwords I don't want to hear in 2016 are:

Disruptor, influencer, thought-leader...

My New Year's resolution for 2015 is:

See more films in the cinema!



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CHARLOTTE COOK

Co-founder, Field of Vision

My favorite doc of 2015 was:

Stand by for *Tape Back-up* [pictured] by Ross Sutherland. One of the most incredible and unique films I've seen in a long time.

I never thought they'd make a film about:

A legal battle over an amputated leg found inside a grill sold at auction. (*Finders Keepers*)

The best factual content I've seen online this year was:

The New York Times is doing incredible work in the innovative visual ways it's presenting long-form and/or investigative stories. Our colleague at *The Intercept*, Josh Begley, continues to be amazing with his artistic approach to data journalism, and [there's also] the growing amount of incredible non-fiction radio across the board.

The most positive development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The renewed embrace for long-form episodic.

The most troubling development in the non-fiction content industry this past year was:

The rise of branded content in feature documentary.

The idea I wish I thought of was:

1. DOK Leipzig's amazing bags that had the slogan "Great Films, Terrible Parties." A festival owning and embracing something like that was beautifully refreshing. 2. TIFF's new Primetime section, which was superb in its first year due to Michael Lerman's incredible programming.

The idea I'm happiest to have had this year was:

Writing personal thank you cards to all the filmmakers at Hot Docs. It took hours every year and I'll miss doing it. There's often an imbalance for filmmakers with festivals, with the impression that it's the filmmakers rather than the festivals who are the lucky ones. Any festival is only ever as good as the films showing, and they are always indebted to the filmmakers. I always wanted to make sure they knew how grateful we were.

If 2015 taught me one thing it was:

Support what you love, always. Independent film is incredibly hard. It's tough for the non-profits, cinemas, media outlets and individuals working hard to help filmmakers and their work. If you love what someone's doing, support it. We lose too many every year. •



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Over a span of seven years, filmmaker Stanley Nelson and his team dug deep into a tumultuous period of American history to craft the story behind the rise and fall of the Black Panther movement, coming to U.S. television in February.

BY KEVIN RITCHIE

REVISITING REVOLUTION

While many other icons of the counter-culture movements of the 1960s have received the documentary treatment, a thorough look at the Black Panthers has been a long time coming.

Active from 1966 to 1982, the Black Panther Party started in Oakland as a response to police brutality and later spread across the U.S. and expanded to encompass education and community social programs.

The group's politics were inspired by revolutionary movements in Cuba, Southeast Asia and Africa, with members brandishing guns and dressing in paramilitary garb to "police the police," attract media attention and rally poor, city-dwelling black Americans to demand economic and political rights.

The party's controversial, aggressive tactics and leftist ideologies rankled federal law enforcement and FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who set out to divide the Panthers from within.

In *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, filmmaker Stanley Nelson uses a mix of archival footage and photos as well as original interviews to revisit the Black Power movement in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

The doc charts the group's origins, its media

strategy and leadership dynamics, as well as significant events such as cofounder Huey Newton's release from prison and the police raid in Chicago that resulted in the death of party leader Fred Hampton in 1969. It is also part of a trilogy about African-American history called 'America Revisited' that Nelson is directing for the ITVS and PBS doc strand 'Independent Lens.'

"Filmmakers think making an historical documentary is a lot easier than it is," says the veteran docmaker and Firelight Media cofounder. "We love the guy that goes to Afghanistan, runs through the desert and gets shot at, but all films are really difficult to make. Although we're not risking our lives in the same way with historical films, to get what's on the screen up on the screen is not simple."

"I knew going in there was significant archive of Panther material," he adds. "The Panthers were this media phenomenon in the day. The big question for me at the beginning was: can I make this film without narration? I felt that because there were so many Panthers who were alive [as well as] witnesses – cops, FBI agents – we could do it."

Over seven years – during which Nelson would take a break to finish *Freedom Riders* for PBS – producers amassed an archive of Panthers footage

and photographs from big archive houses, private collections and well-known filmmakers such as Agnès Varda and William Klein.

Nelson hired producer Laurens Grant, who led the search for little or never-before-seen Panther footage. Initially Grant thought she had two and a half years, but the extended production schedule turned out to be beneficial to the massive undertaking ahead: the team ultimately logged and cataloged close to 7,000 items.

The seven-year schedule gave her more time to pursue sources that were initially hesitant to participate in the film. For example, Grant tracked down the son of freelance photographer Kenneth Green, who was around for the party's early days. The son's garage was full of negatives and prints – some labeled, some not – but it took persuading to allow producers access to the collection.

"He really wanted to take the care to bring his father's work to light and so he was nervous because it was all new to him," she recalls.

The production also encountered cynicism among former Panthers and their families who had been repeatedly approached over the years to participate in various Panther-related movie projects that never went anywhere.

"A lot of it was concern, suspicion and wariness





Women drilling (Pirkle Jones and Ruth-Marion Baruch); Panthers march down a street (Stephen Shames); Huey Newton (Stephen Shames); Children walk by Panther graffiti (Stephen Shames); "Free Huey" rally (Pirkle Jones and Ruth-Marion Baruch)

because we were wallowing in the blowback from Hollywood in the '70s," says Grant. "We did have to wade in those waters to convince people to trust us with their work, but I understand why. Hearing the photographers talk about their images, the closeness they have to them and the closeness to that era – it's also a history they lived through the lens.

"So I felt that extra weight, but I also knew that archival was essential to the film and we had to get something new and fresh," she continues. "It was really important to stick with them and say, 'We really think it's important that you participate in this film.'"

Not only did Nelson want producers to unearth unseen archive, he wanted to ensure as many images as possible came from African-American photographers, such as Howard Bingham and Stephen Shames.

"I like to think that they are our generation's World War II correspondents. They were the civil rights or Black Power movement photographers," says Grant. "We felt it was important that they be included in this type of film along with the usual archival suspects – the local affiliates, the NBCs, CBSs and BBCs of the world."

Without a narrator, the archival material also had to advance and explain the story without relying too much on interview sources for exposition. The Panthers were involved in several shoot-outs with police but Nelson decided to focus on a five-hour gun battle with the Los Angeles Police Department's newly formed SWAT division in 1969.

The firefight took place at the Panthers' Southern California headquarters, which they had fortified with sandbags. Officers could not get in so the gunplay dragged on, giving news crews ample time to get there and capture the action.

Nelson interviewed eyewitnesses, former police officers as well as the former Panthers in order to get all sides and convey the mood.

"Wayne Pharr was trapped in the building. The police were shooting in, he was shooting out and he's running out of bullets. I asked him, 'How did you feel?' and he said, 'I felt free. I was a free Negro,'" recalls Nelson. "It's an incredible piece because when he says it he's looking dead at me, unblinkingly. It's startling.

"As I'm talking to people I'm constantly saying, 'We're back there. We're in 1967, 1968. How did you feel? What did you see?'" adds Nelson. "I didn't want them to talk about, 'If only I knew then what I know now.' Sometimes I'll even ask, 'What did it smell like?' Smell is one of our craziest memories. We really want people to go back and be in the moment back then. Sometimes it leads to real magic."

Another sequence Nelson was able to tell from multiple sides was a conversation between Party founder Huey

Newton and Algeria-based member Eldridge Cleaver. The pair argued over the phone on a live talk show, resulting in Cleaver's expulsion from the party in 1971.

Grant had footage and audio from Cleaver's wife and the talk show host, Jim Dunbar, but was also able to source footage of Cleaver talking on the phone in Algeria shot by French photographer William Klein.

The footage turned up three years ago after Nelson mentioned during a director talk that his next project would be a documentary about the Black Panthers. A man approached him afterward and mentioned he had Panther-related Portapak footage sitting in his closet at home and offered to give it to the production. Grant spent a month tracking the man down and then finding a facility that could transfer it.

"That type of thing happens more than you would think," Nelson says. "It's this real shot of adrenaline because you wonder, 'Are we on the right path?' But there is something in the universe that's working with us to get this thing made, because so many times when you're making a film it feels like the universe is working against you."

As Nelson was editing the film in 2014 in time for the doc to premiere at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, news of the Black Lives Matter protest movement and footage of police violence was reaching a boil in the press and online. The poignancy was not lost on the production team.

"The film was relevant seven years ago and it just became more and more relevant as we went forward," he says.

The doc's focus on how the tone and tactics of African-American activists have evolved and the way the media has covered that evolution is clearly resonating with viewers.

Black Panthers premiered at Sundance in January and opened theatrically in the U.S. last fall through PBS Distribution. The initial run was supposed to be eight cities but expanded to 60. It also played another 150 cities at festivals or one-off events and it played in the UK in 15 cities. Nelson has attended many of those screenings, sometimes with former Panthers and Black Lives Matter activists in attendance.

Ahead of the U.S. TV premiere on 'Independent Lens' in February, ITVS is organizing 75 to 85 community screenings of the film across the U.S.

"It's been the most amazing thing I've ever seen," he says. "We never thought it would reach the amount of people that it would."

"Hopefully the film can be a takeaway that people can use to understand what it means to be an activist," adds Grant. "It was every day, all day and they sacrificed a lot for what they believed in. Whether or not you believe it too, that is what it means to be involved in something that deeply."

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UP AND COMING ARCHIVAL



EAT THAT QUESTION: FRANK ZAPPA IN HIS OWN WORDS

DIRECTOR: THORSTEN SCHÜTTE

Frank Zappa is the latest musician to receive the all-archival doc treatment.

Eat That Question: Frank Zappa In His Own Words looks

at the life and philosophies of the late avant-garde rocker entirely through his interviews and TV appearances. Eight years in the making, the doc has the support of Zappa's Family Trust and will have its world premiere out-of-competition at the Sundance Film Festival in January.

"Frank Zappa was one of the most outstanding musicians and composers of the 20th century," contends the film's director, Thorsten Schütte, in an interview with *realscreen*. "In many regards, he is underestimated and labeled as an *enfant terrible* of rock n' roll, but the complexity and scope of his work, together with his position as a social commentator, made him very dear to me."

The prolific, genre-defying musician released more than 65 albums and directed several short films from the late 1960s until his death from

Realscreen offers a first look at three archive-based projects making their debuts at Sundance.

BY KEVIN RITCHIE

prostate cancer at age 52 in 1993.

The doc is 100% archival, sourced almost entirely from broadcast vaults across Europe, North America and Australia, and features no originally-shot footage or interviews.

Schütte re-edited the footage, much of it little-seen or forgotten, to re-contextualize Zappa's music and ideas in new and unexpected ways.

"I wanted to give the maximum focus on Zappa in his own voice," he adds. "The immense variety of his output, the go-getting nature of his career, his urge to express ideas radically and to always maintain his personal creative freedom and creativity are telling things, relevant to today's generation."

An avid Zappa fan and collector in his teenage years, Schütte would often search for Zappa-related material while perusing TV archives for various doc projects over the years. He began conceptualizing *Eat That Question* (under the working title *Zapped*) in 2008 and approached the Family Trust two years later.

He took his time winning their confidence, promising Zappa's widow, Gail, he would unearth new material and put a fresh perspective on Zappa's public persona. The Trust has a deep and well-organized vault but the family was curious in what else the director might find.

By 2012, Schütte and producers for teamWorx Production and Les Films du Poisson secured a commission from ARD/SWR and hired Canada-based archival researcher Elizabeth Klinck to start combing broadcast archives around the world.

Thanks to Zappa's cult-ish fanbase, a lot of his film work and TV appearances were on YouTube, so Schütte and Klinck already had a long list of must-haves and "Holy Grails" when production began.

"The big challenge was to find out if the material still existed, if the masters were in good shape, who owned the rights and tracking down gems people

hadn't seen before," says Klinck, who adds that clearing music rights was relatively straight-forward since Zappa owned all of his own publishing. (Earlier this year, the Zappa Family Trust inked a deal with Universal Music Enterprises.)

Extended interview clips came from NBC, ABC, CBS, SVT, CNN and ITN among others, with choice finds unearthed in CTV and CBC archives in Canada, as well as Pennsylvania where Klinck tracked down

"The material is easier to see thanks to the Internet but the job of clearing it is harder and harder."

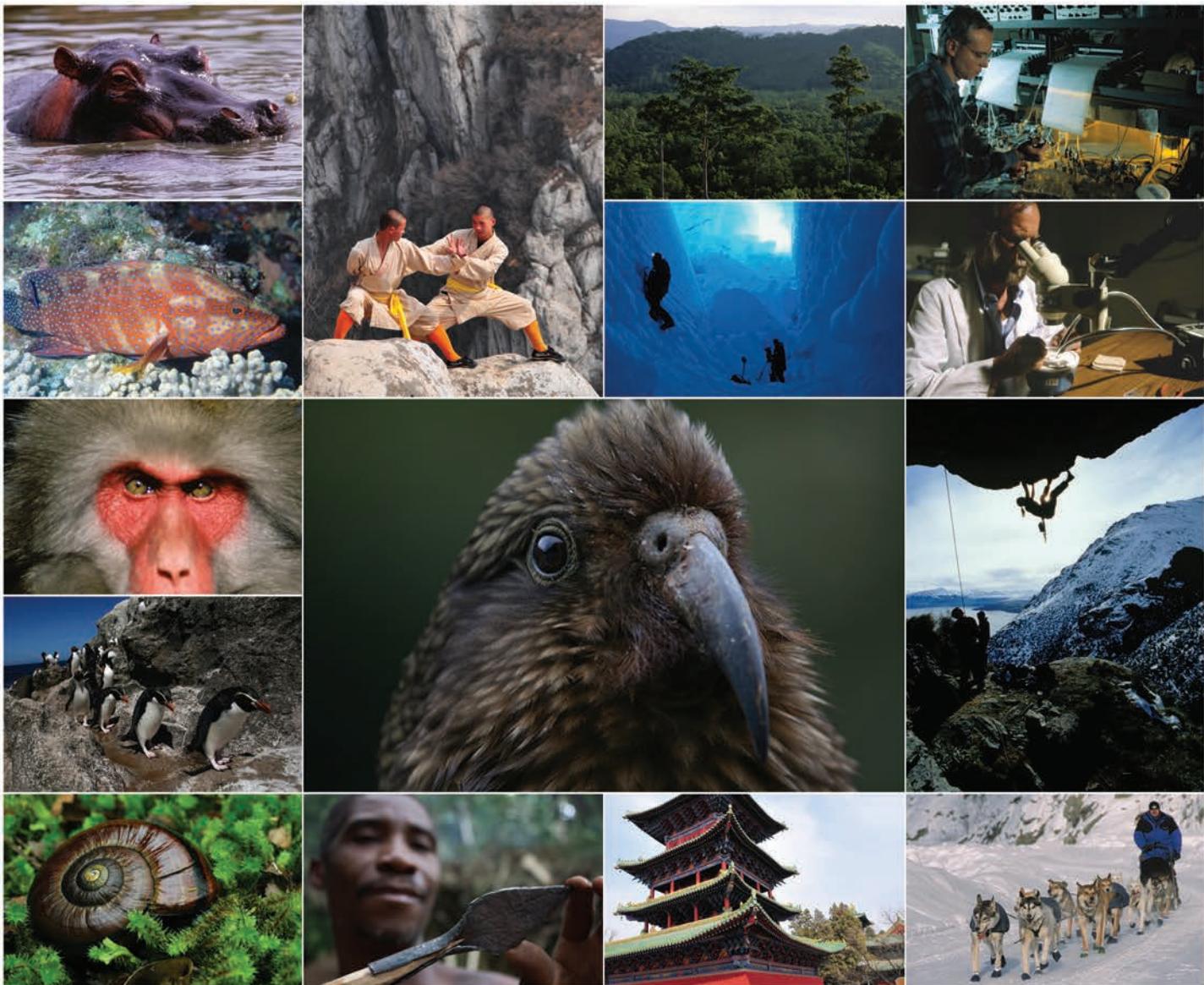
the master tapes of a 1981 interview Zappa did with a state police officer to a local school board's archive.

Klinck calls Zappa "an embarrassment of riches" as a documentary subject. However, the condition of the material made the search challenging. Many 16 mm masters were often lost or in poor condition, having been shoddily transferred into various formats over the years.

"The material is easier to see thanks to the Internet but the job of clearing it and getting the materials is harder and harder," explains Klinck.

"We had our priority list. There were things that were hard to find and there were things we were pretty sure would still exist," adds Schütte. "The toughest was figuring out what had survived from the 1960s from West Coast broadcasters."

"We met with the Family Trust throughout editing to show them where we stood and they were very helpful when it came to the publishers," he adds. "Without the trust and the support of the Zappa Family Trust, this would not have worked."



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DIRECTOR: PENNY LANE

“The shape and contour of his life was so immediately cinematic. His life really did have this three-act, tragic structure.”

P

enny Lane had a strict set of rules when she made the all-archival documentary *Our Nixon*: no still images, use only archival sources.

That approach worked because she had stumbled upon a cache of home movies shot by disgraced U.S. president Richard Nixon's closest advisors. The main character in her latest film, *Nuts!*, was another notorious American public figure, but he turned out to be more elusive.

Using a mix of archival footage, animated re-enactments and interviews, Lane recounts the life of 1920s-era conman, Dr. John Romulus Brinkley, whose claim to fame was a goat testicle transplant procedure that he sold as a cure for impotency.

She discovered Brinkley's story after spotting a copy of Pope Brock's book *Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him and the Age of Flimflam* on a display rack at her local library.

“The word ‘flimflam’ was appealing so I grabbed the book,” says Lane. “It was full of these hilarious, bizarre stories and you don’t really know what’s true. The shape and contour of his life was so immediately cinematic. His life really did have this three-act, tragic structure. Famous last words: this’ll be easy!”

Eight years later, *Nuts!* is premiering at the Sundance Film Festival.

Lane began gathering archival material on Brinkley at small historical societies in Kansas and Texas. She had ad copy he wrote, radio recordings, a memoir he had dictated and a touring

promotional film styled as an educational film that an archivist in the Library of Congress stumbled across on a mislabeled reel.

Stringing it all together, she realized it was not enough to create a compelling main character.

“He had controlled every aspect of his public image,” she explains. “There was a glimmer of who it could be but he wasn’t going to ever come across to an audience. You were never going to be seduced by him, which is really what I needed to do.”

That is when she decided to animate the bulk of the film – 51 of 79 minutes – with hand-drawn illustrations from newspapers and advertisements from her archive serving as references. Throughout the doc, the animated Brinkley morphs depending on the point of view.

“The movie is so much about how my character constructed an image of himself,” explains Lane. “Sometimes he looks how he would draw himself: a heroic, awesome maverick. Other times he looks like the way his opponents would draw him, as this cartoonish devil figure, potentially dangerous. We were able to play with that in various scenes in a subtle way.”

Lane describes archival research as central to her creative process as a director. She always starts the process on her own but as production progresses, hires seasoned professionals – in this case Rosemary Rotundi and Rich Remsberg – to make sure she does not miss anything big.

Most of the archive in *Nuts!* falls under fair use or public domain categories since the time period covered is the 1920s and 1930s.

Thus, the big challenge for Lane in mixing archive with animation was conveying to contemporary viewers the attitudes of the era and how people could have fallen for Brinkley’s scheme.

“This particular thing might be antiquated and sound absurd, but if you look around in your own life there are probably a thousand things that are dubious but people might believe in if they met the right pitchman,” she says. “It would be so easy to say look at all these ‘dumb’ people and ask how could they have possibly believed him? But we are all those dumb people – every single one of us.”

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MAPPLETHORPE: LOOK AT THE PICTURES

DIRECTORS: FENTON BAILEY AND RANDY BARBATO

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he year ahead will be a big one for fans of late photographer Robert Mapplethorpe.

Four years after acquiring 2,000 Mapplethorpe photographs, the J. Paul Getty Museum and Los Angeles County Museum of Art are joining forces on a major retrospective of his work that will open in Los Angeles in March and run through July.

Meanwhile, preparations for the concurrent exhibits are chronicled in a documentary about Mapplethorpe's life and work – the first since his death from AIDS-related complications in 1989 – that is having its world premiere at Sundance.

Directed and produced by World of Wonder's Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, *Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures* will then air on HBO in April, in conjunction with the retrospectives.

Bailey and Barbato made the film with the assistance of The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, which provided access to the artist's broad spectrum of work, from his most controversial photographs to his little-seen collages and experimental films.

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“The challenge with Robert was that his time period was a little bit before everyone had a video camera.”

nudes, still-life flowers and BDSM images became influential – and in the latter case, notorious – Mapplethorpe became more widely known shortly after his death when a traveling exhibition of his work, *The Perfect Moment*, was cancelled in Washington D.C. That move set off a debate about arts funding.

Although he became one of the best known photographers of the past 50 years, not a lot of moving footage of him exists compared with other 20th century art icons. For *World of Wonder*'s in-house archival producer, Mona Card, Mapplethorpe proved an elusive subject.

“The challenge with Robert was that his time period was a little bit before everyone had a video camera,” she explains.

Working with the Mapplethorpe Foundation, the Getty Research Institute and Mapplethorpe's family, Card was able to amass early childhood photos, family home movies and his photos and

art work – from early Polaroids to both his best-known and little-seen works.

Nearly 50 of Mapplethorpe's friends, colleagues and family – including Sam Wagstaff, David Croland, Lisa Lyon, Brooke Shields, Fran Lebowitz, Helen and Brice Marden, and Jack Walls – participated in the doc. Although a few friends opted not to participate – at least one did not want to share footage deemed too personal – the majority of those approached agreed to take part.

Still, moving footage was difficult to find. Mapplethorpe was not a paparazzi or media figure and even footage from art openings was hard to track down, so the photographer is most present in the film through audio commentary originally recorded on cassette and microcassette during interviews with print journalists.

Footage in the film includes excerpts from two documentaries about Mapplethorpe, as well as news footage shot when Mapplethorpe lived with

Patti Smith at the Chelsea Hotel, which came from an old CBS News archive owned by T3 Digital.

“We were looking at stuff from the Chelsea at the time and one of the women we interviewed, artist Sandy Daley, was interviewed for a news story about people who lived there,” says Card. “The hotel manager had suggested Sandy because he liked her room. It was all painted white with nothing really in it. It turned out she had Robert come in to sit with her. It wasn't archived under his name so it was a lucky find.”

Since Mapplethorpe and his *Perfect Moment* exhibit are now textbook case studies for photography students, the team behind *Look at the Pictures* hopes viewers will walk away from the film with a deeper understanding of his formative influences and creative evolution.

“We cover everything so the depth is unusual,” says Card. “You wouldn't be able to go to a show and see such a broad spectrum of his work.” •

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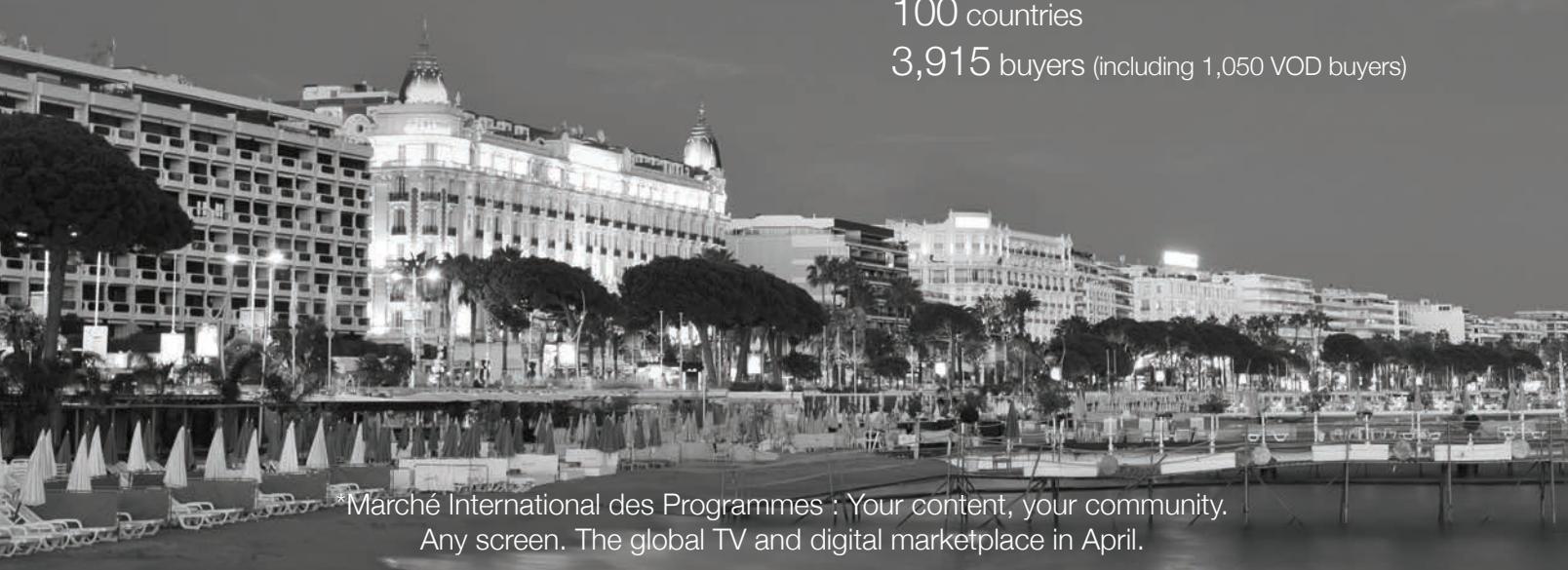
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DOCS IN DEMAND

Discovery Channel began 2015 by hiring former HBO exec John Hoffman to oversee documentary and specials commissioning, and then, shortly thereafter, acquiring Louie Psihogios' *Racing Extinction* at the Sundance Film Festival.

The moves were definitely eye-openers in the doc filmmaking community which, it's probably safe to say, raised eyebrows over Discovery's recent forays into reality fare and headline-grabbing "docutainment" specials.

A year later, Hoffman has a slate of 10 original commissions and is working with 14 Academy Award-nominated filmmakers. He is already talking to producers about projects that can air across his doc slots in 2018 and 2019.

Discovery is not the only cable network or platform chasing buzz-worthy docs. Competitors such as National Geographic Channel, Netflix and PBS are aggressively moving into the feature doc space so there was a lot riding on *Racing Extinction*'s success.

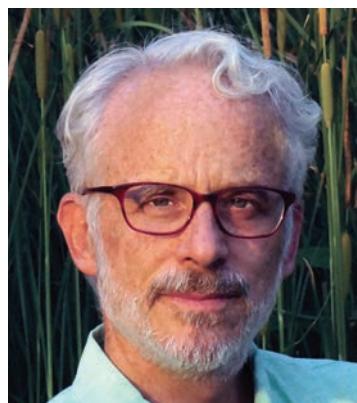
"I will admit I was genuinely nervous," says Hoffman, who is also overseeing docs for Discovery's sister nets Animal Planet and Science Channel. "It was a substantial investment. It was a commitment from the company all around the world. Every department and division touched this product. I guess you could say I staked my reputation on trying to find a title that speaks to the ability of the documentary to be brand-defining."

Psihogios, who won an Oscar for *The Cove*, had structured his examination of mass extinction like a spy thriller and fine-tuned its messaging with help from Paul G. Allen's Vulcan Productions to maximize the potential for social impact.

The legwork Psihogios and Vulcan did to promote the film ensured that it had a timely message that would resonate widely across social media and has set a standard for producers and directors with films that have potential to receive the global event treatment from Discovery.

"There was a view here that we were successful before we went on the air because of the level of attention the film was getting," explains Hoffman.

Discovery positioned the film as a worldwide event, airing it in 220 markets around the world on December 2 and promoting it for months ahead of time.



JOHN HOFFMAN
EVP, Documentaries and
Specials, Discovery Channel

As a result, the doc's premiere attracted a total of 16.7 million viewers including weekend encores in the U.S., with an unduplicated worldwide reach of 35.6 million total viewers, including the U.S. weekend encores.

The event-based strategy will continue in 2016, with Discovery giving two films similar global roll-outs. The next is Jennifer Peedom's *Sherpa*, which will air on April 9 as part of Discovery's mountain-focused 'Elevation

'Weekend' strand. Another stunt-based film with "prominent talent" involved will be announced early in the year.

In all, Hoffman will slot 25 films a year across various umbrellas that include big events or stunts, anthology series and limited series. Two six-episode limited series with well-known filmmakers are in production.

Some docs will be pegged to familiar strands such as 'Shark Week' and 'Elevation Weekend,' while others will fall under new strands to be announced in 2016, according to Hoffman.

"We are more in the commissioning than the acquisitions game," he adds. "We have to be nimble in both. We have to commission when there are stories that we feel that have to be told, but not commit so much of our money that we can't buy something when it shows up at a market or someone brings it to us."

Hoffman has a focus on natural history and science, but wants to find ways to reinvent the blue-chip form by bringing on board filmmaking talent not usually associated with the *Planet Earth*-type doc series Discovery used to coproduce with the BBC.

"That form has really not performed well for American audiences so we're investing in ways of reinventing the storytelling," he explains. "We are trying to develop some fun approaches to documentary storytelling and working in novel ways with some of the best filmmakers in the business."

For 2016, Hoffman has high standards to live up to.

"[Our films] have to rate. They have to generate unprecedented social media numbers. They have to be uniformly seen as well-made, beautiful films," he says. "They have to get great reviews and they have to be award-worthy. I don't think I'm being successful unless I'm hitting all of those measures."

BY KEVIN RITCHIE

As the push for premium content gains momentum across platforms internationally, the feature doc is enjoying something of a renaissance on television. *Realscreen* speaks with three recently appointed commissioners from the U.S., the UK and Europe to gain more insight into the trend, and their own programming needs.



DIEGO BUÑUEL

Head of documentaries, Canal+

Six months after Canal+ head of documentaries Diego Buñuel told delegates at Sunny Side of the Doc that his goal was to air “great f***ing movies,” the French pay-TV channel has films about dancer/choreographer Benjamin Millepied and judo champ Teddy Riner set for 2016.

Buñuel, a television journalist and filmmaker who joined the company to lead its doc division in September 2014, is on a mission to commission documentaries with legs on the international festival circuit and invest in more coproductions.

The network has ten 90-minute documentaries locked in for the year ahead that will air under the channel’s ‘Création Documentaire’ banner, as well as 10 hour-long films that air at 10:30 p.m., on topics ranging from sports to the porn industry, and from Islamic extremism to the arts.

Highlights include *Game Fever*, director Hervé Martin Delpierre’s look at the growing market for eSports in Asia; and a coproduction with BBC2 and Keo Films about the plight of migrants in Europe called *Break into Europe*. An American coproduction is also underway that he can’t talk about just yet.

“The idea with ‘Création Documentaire’ was to make films that we were not used to seeing in France, meaning very strong storytelling and high-quality cinematography that is more common in the UK and U.S. markets but not so common in France,” Buñuel tells *realscreen*.

So far, there is evidence the strategy is working. The network’s BBC France-produced doc feature about French dance duo Daft Punk, *Daft Punk Unchained*, was picked up in the United States by premium cabler Showtime and aired in December.

The film is indicative of the lighter tone he hopes to strike in comparison to rote, expert-laden dissections of social issues that he says viewers have come to expect from French TV documentaries.

International producers hoping to land financing at Canal+ generally need a local connection but Buñuel is keen to sign on to big projects with global appeal.

“There has to be a French connection,” he explains. “It’s hard to bring people to our channel in primetime for 90 minutes if we don’t have something strong. Having said that, if the film is a unique access point into something incredible – I’m making this up but something like ‘Obama’s last month at the White House’ – then OK, we’ll take it.”

He wants to steer the channel away from talking head-type docs that delve into a particular subject and instead focus on projects that have a cinematic vision and strong narrative arc.

“I’m not looking for purely international topics like the crisis in Ukraine or purely geopolitical films,” he says. “We don’t really do history or science. We do ultra-contemporary issue stories. Like I said in June, my editorial policy was ‘to do great f***ing movies’ and that remains my editorial policy. I don’t want to shut myself off from theme – if it’s a great story, we want to hear about it – but it has to be an ambitious, cinematic film.”

Buñuel attends an exhausting list of festivals and markets, including Sundance, TIFF, IDFA, MIPCOM, MIPTV and Tribeca. Budgets for original 90-minute primetime docs range from €400,000 to €600,000. Recent Canal+ acquisitions include Alex Gibney’s *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*, Jimmy

Chin and Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi’s *Meru* and Matthew Heineman’s *Cartel Land* – all three of which, incidentally, made this year’s Oscar shortlist.

In the meantime, Buñuel hopes he will also be promoting Canal+ titles at some of the aforementioned festivals. Specifically, Thierry Dermaiziére and Alban Teurlai’s Millepied doc *Relève* and *Teddy Riner* from Black Dynamite Production and HTO, for which cameras have followed the eight-time world champion judo athlete for three years in the lead-up to the Rio Olympics.

“I really want to go international, do more coproductions and bring France into the fold of the global documentary community,” he sums up.

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**PATRICK HOLLAND****Head of commissioning for documentaries, the BBC**

The documentaries team at the BBC has a new boss, a new structure and a new mindset going into 2016.

Since former Boundless Productions MD Patrick Holland started working as head of documentaries in September – replacing Emma Willis who left in 2014 – he has hired former Indus Films exec Jamie Balment and former Voltage TV exec Danny Horan as commissioning editors and promoted Clare Sillery to commissioning editor.

Holland's goal is to develop a pan-BBC strategy that encourages independent and in-house producers to bring projects to the doc commissioners who will then determine the timeslot and whether it is a fit for BBC1, BBC2, BBC3 or BBC4.

"What was happening before was a commissioner would say, 'We're looking for short series at 9 o'clock,' and that is a way to drive ambition down," he explains. "Rather than people thinking, 'How can I make a story about the biggest, most important subject in the UK today,' producers were thinking, 'How can I make a three-part series for £180,000 an episode that would fit on BBC2 at 9 o'clock?'

"I haven't got single commissioning editors working to single channels," he adds. "There are no silos."

Holland's team commissions more than 50 hours for BBC1, upwards of 80 hours for BBC2 and 50 hours for BBC3.

BBC1 airs dramatic character-led documentary series that give viewers exclusive access into a particular world, such as *The Met: Policing London*. Execs are interested in reputational series and documentaries and will air four or five big 90-minute documentaries a year.

One such doc will be director Olly Lambert and Minnow Films' *Abused: The Untold Story* (working title), a film about child abuse in the UK and the cultural impact of the Jimmy Savile scandal.

The network also airs formatted documentary and competition series, such as *The Great British Bake Off*. Although that series is a

ratings hit, Holland is sensing that many big formats are feeling tired in the UK.

"Heart, warmth and a sense of purpose are really important to competition formats," he says. "Audiences are feeling alienated by formats where there's a sense of the heavy hand of the producer or an over-reliance on rules."

In general, Holland and BBC2 controller Kim Shillinglaw want that channel to move away from docs that describe the world to commission projects that "actively engage with it." BBC2 docs should have a vibrancy and storytelling device that draws viewers into a story, with Holland citing *The Detectives*, which took viewers inside the sex crimes unit of the Manchester police, as an example. "That means we're looking for present-tense series that put the audience up close to how the world is changing in the UK," says Holland.

BBC3 is moving online but some of its long-form docs will also air across the terrestrial networks. Holland's team will also commission five and 10-minute interstitial programs to air around films and series that will be released online "like a box-set" for viewers who prefer to binge-watch as they please.

"There has been a sense at the BBC that commissioning is a passive role and that we take ideas from producers and just deliver them to the channels," says Holland. "I'm much keener on the team working collaboratively with producers so that we work with you on the best ideas to give them the best chance."

While the majority of the BBC's output is commissioned in the UK, Holland also wants to have coproduction conversations earlier on for feature documentaries that require substantial secondary rights investment. The pubcaster is in talks with a U.S. broadcaster to coproduce a big-name documentary filmmaker's next project.

"Increasingly we're going to be having those sorts of discussions," he says. "We would be interested in being involved at an earlier stage. Projects like *Amy* or *Virunga* – we would love to be talking copro with other people around the world on projects like that."

Diversity is another issue that is top of mind for Holland. He wants to build on director Robb Leech's *Welcome to the Mosque*, about an East London mosque that is often at the center of radical Islam news coverage. A doc series about immigration and a series about the housing crisis in London are also in the works at BBC2.

Holland maintains he also wants more working class voices in the mix at the BBC.

"There are a lot of middle-class white people making television," he says. "There is a new talent scheme we're bringing in early next year that is going to be a talent ladder through BBC Documentary. We're actively looking for people who come from different backgrounds." •

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singular



REACHING FOR THE STARS

BY BARRY WALSH

As National Geographic Channel U.S. celebrates 15 years on the air, its senior executive team reflects on recent successes, living up to a legacy and taking big, bold steps into the future.

As 2013 was coming to a close, Seth MacFarlane was making the press rounds, discussing his role as executive producer of the reboot of the venerable *Cosmos*. Set to air globally on the National Geographic Channel (NGC) and its broadcast partners at Fox in early 2014, there was palpable excitement about the science series being reborn for a new generation, but there were some eyebrows raised – primarily regarding the involvement of MacFarlane, creator of Fox's raucous animated comedy *The Family Guy*. Could, or should, serious science "go Hollywood"?

"You talk to people at the jet propulsion lab and they'll tell you they got into the business because they were *Star Trek* fans," reasoned MacFarlane when chatting with *realscreen* at the time. "That's certainly indicative of television's power to excite people about certain subjects. To that end, there has been so much criticism of television – network television in particular – over the years for never using its reach for educational purposes. And I think this is the first time that something like this is being done at this scale."

"So if it doesn't do huge numbers, no one can

Neil deGrasse Tyson (pictured) and Seth MacFarlane helped bring *Cosmos* to a new audience via National Geographic Channels and Fox.

ever complain about that again," he summed up.

Of course, we now know he needn't have worried. *Cosmos: A Space-Time Odyssey* was a global smash, with 135 million tuning in at some point over the course of its run, and 45 million of those in the U.S. And for the team at National Geographic Channel, which had, since 2001, built its reputation on creating quality content that educates as well as entertains, it was the ultimate validation. The smart stuff can be, and perhaps should be, fun too.

ON A MISSION

Coming to the U.S. as a joint venture between National Geographic Television and Film and Fox Cable Networks, National Geographic Channel had already established itself as a purveyor of quality content following launches in the UK, Europe and Australia in 1997, and in Asia in 1998. Arriving in America at the turn of the millennium, and based at the National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, DC, the channel has, over the past 15 years, endeavored to fulfill the Society's mission of "working to inspire,

"illuminate and teach" while entertaining audiences with authentic, engrossing stories of science, adventure and exploration.

Launching in 10 million homes, early ratings successes such as 2003's *Crocodiles: Here Be Dragons*, 2004's *Return to the Titanic*, and 2005's *Inside 9/11* helped take NGC into over 50 million households by mid-decade. It's now available in nearly 90 million households in the U.S., and globally, National Geographic Channel reaches more than 440 million homes in 171 countries.

Granted, the National Geographic brand had significant cachet prior to the channel's U.S. launch, via the world-renowned print magazine and other extensions. It began its foray into television through scores of television specials which had aired on myriad networks including PBS, CBS and ABC beginning in 1965, when the Society debuted its television division through the special *Americans on Everest*. In 1985, the blue-chip documentary strand 'Explorer' made its debut on Nickelodeon, and moved across assorted networks until landing at NGC.



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Great care was taken by the Society and National Geographic Television to ensure that, like the print edition, Nat Geo's TV output would adhere to rigorous standards of accuracy while also giving audiences unrivalled access to fascinating worlds. Those leading the charge today for the Channel say that spirit still drives the content.

"National Geographic has not only a proven track record, but ever since the inception of a television division we have had over 50 years of delivering high quality and authentic stories that have resulted in exclusive and unprecedented access," says Tim Pastore, who began his career at National Geographic via its Studios division and was named president of NGC in 2014. "We were the first cable network to broadcast live from the Titanic, literally from the bottom of the ocean floor [in 2004's *Return to Titanic*], and had exclusive world access to the *Gospel of Judas* [for a 2006 special]."

There has also been, over the course of NGC's history, programming that has expanded the notion of what fits within Nat Geo's yellow border, with character-led fare such as *Wicked Tuna*, which premiered in 2012, and "edutainment" series such as *Brain Games*,

which made its debut in 2011, being some of the channel's strongest and most consistent recent performers. A push into scripted programming, beginning with 2012's broadcast of *SEAL Team Six: The Raid on Osama Bin Laden*, also drew audiences and signified an appetite for scripted content on NGC.

But the arrival of *Cosmos* in 2014, and the reception to the 13-episode miniseries, signalled the beginning of a new era for the channel and its content strategy. In an increasingly cluttered cable landscape, if the channel was to both maintain its relevance and connect with a wider audience, it would have to continue taking the big swings, while ensuring that it remained "on brand."

BREAKING THROUGH

"The real tipping point for me was *Cosmos*," says Courteney Monroe, CEO of National Geographic

Global Networks. At the time, Monroe was NGC's chief marketing officer, brought over from HBO. Shortly after *Cosmos*' March debut, she was named CEO of National Geographic Channels, replacing David Lyle, who had served in the post since 2011.

"That was really the point where I realized there was a tremendous appetite on the part of the audience for programming on science, as long as it was highly entertaining and told with Hollywood storytelling, storytellers and production values," she says.

Indeed, at its spring upfront in 2015, NGC unveiled another move into what was now being called "premium content" – a science and technology anthology series titled 'Breakthrough' that would feature six episodes, each helmed by Hollywood A-listers such as Brett Ratner and Paul Giamatti, exec produced by Brian

continues on page 073 ►



Monroe

2001

National Geographic Channel (NGC) launches with 10 million subscribers.

NGC's *Into the Forbidden Zone*, with best-selling author Sebastian Junger, airs. Show features rare interview with anti-Taliban guerilla leader Ahmad Shah Massoud.

2002

NGC surpasses 20 million households in its first year.

NGC's *Inside the Pentagon* airs. Historic look at the institution features extensive footage of 9/11 attack aftermath.

NGC surpasses 30 million households, and receives first National Emmy Award for *Inside Base Camp*.

2003

NGC's first cumulatively over 1 million with *Crocodiles: Here Be Dragons*.

NGC surpasses 40 million households.

NGC airs *Surviving Everest*, documents 50th anniversary of the Everest Expedition.

2004

NGC's *Return to the Titanic* airs with Titanic-discoverer Bob Ballard, includes live broadcast from 12,000 feet below sea level.

NGC surpasses 50 million households.

NGC gets first 1.0 household rating with *Inside the U.S. Secret Service* and then reaches new record rating – a 1.6 household rating for *Unlocking DaVinci's Code*.

NGC closes the year with fastest-growing ratings of all networks, broadcast and cable, and four consecutive quarters of record ratings.

2005

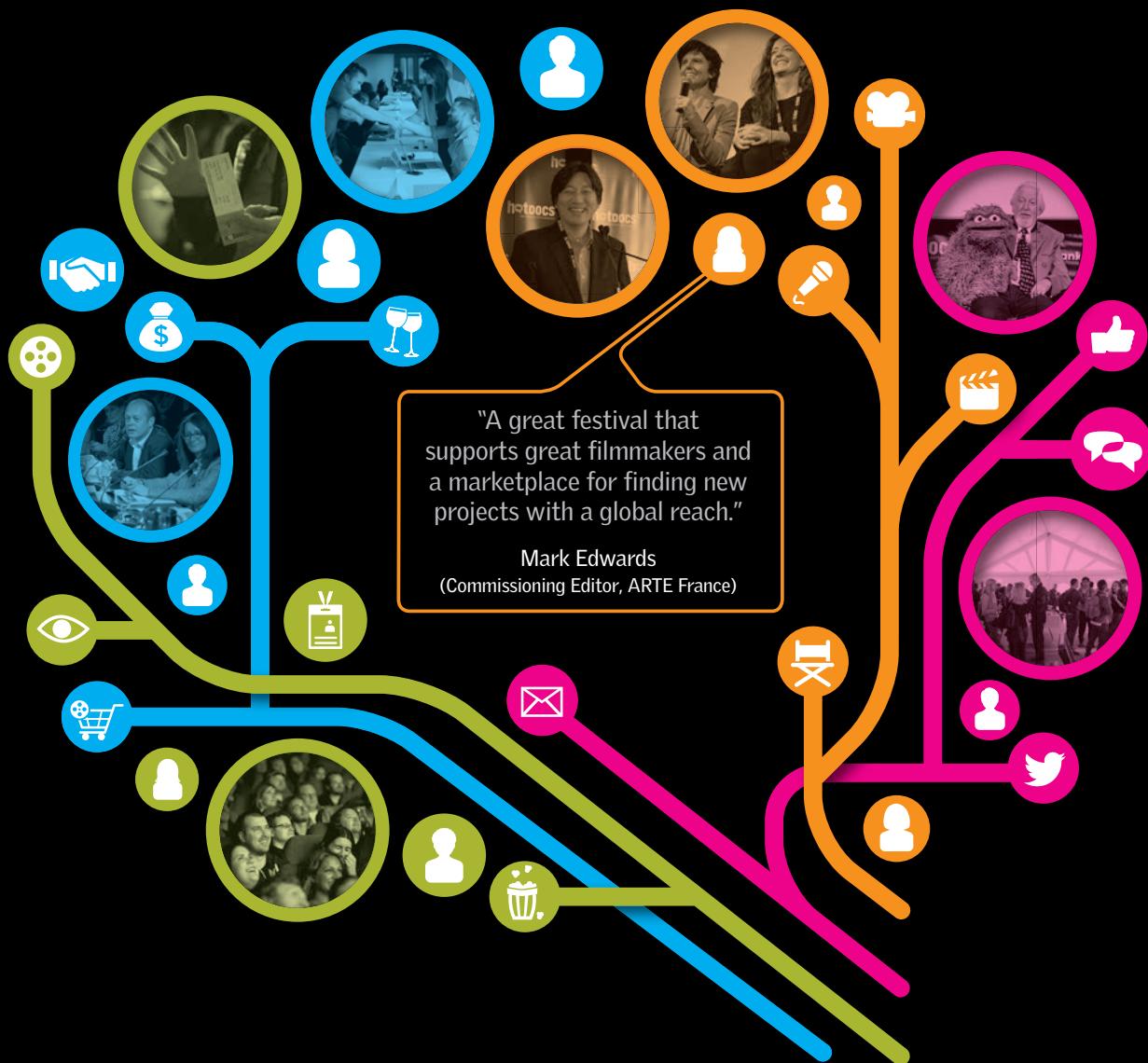
Highly acclaimed, award-winning signature series 'Explorer' moves to NGC.

NGC breaks ratings record for *Inside 9/11* in August.

continues on page 073 ►



Jumping for joy?: One of the animal inhabitants seen in Nat Geo Wild's *Wild Yellowstone*.



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Grazer and Ron Howard and developed with global brand GE.

"Currently, and certainly more so in the future, the businesses that are going to survive are those with the very best content inside the most relevant and resonant brands," offers Monroe regarding the push towards premium content. "This quest for quality is really about breaking through the clutter, and I don't know how you'd do that with anything less than the highest-quality, premium content."

"And that's in our DNA and our birthright as National Geographic – that's what the yellow border stands for," she says.

Pastore is quick to add that the NGC talent pool isn't closed to newer producers, especially those who are keen to explore both in terms of subject matter and technique.

"One thing about the independent producer landscape over the last few years that has become exciting from a commissioner's point of view is that the creative handcuffs have really been taken off. You're starting to gather a pool of producers with a significant range of experiences and technical capabilities," he says. "For us, as a global brand, we lend ourselves to truly being a

home for these creative individuals to be able to exercise that storytelling muscle."

That emphasis on creativity extends to Nat Geo's multi-platform footprint. Nat Geo has 14 channels on YouTube, which have racked up close to two billion views to date. Cross-platform offerings range from 10-second clips to short-form docs.

Pushing out content to younger audiences via social media is also a priority, and as a brand, National Geographic's reputation for breathtaking imagery from around the globe makes its content extremely attractive for users of such platforms as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. A recent study from data analysts Shareablee named Nat Geo as the number one brand on social media with the largest share of Instagram followers, cited as more than 80 million by Shareablee, and a mind-boggling number of social actions across the platforms they surveyed – more than 482.5 million.

"When I talk to a 19-year-old and they say, 'I follow National Geographic on Instagram every day!,' on the one hand it makes me very happy and on the other, my next question is, 'Do you watch the channel?'" says Liz Dolan, CMO of

Fox International Channels and National Geographic Channels International.

"I think the fact that we have these entrées into younger users and lovers of the brand from around the world will help us to convert them into being viewers of the channel."



Pastore

FEEDING AUDIENCE PASSION

Part of that process involves tapping into the passions of

the core audience of NGC and its sister networks, Nat Geo Wild and Nat Geo Mundo. Geoff Daniels, EVP and GM for Wild, says: "The more we've leaned into feeding our audience's passion, the more we've been rewarded."

continues on page 074 ▶



2006

NGC-HD launches a Hi-Def simulcast of the linear network.

The National Geographic Society publicly reveals the only known surviving copy of the Gospel of Judas. Seven million people tune in for the TV special *The Gospel of Judas*.

NGC surpasses 60 million subscribers.

2007

Steve Schiffman is named general manager of NGC.

Stonehenge Decoded premieres, detailing the first proof of a 4,500-year-old Stone Age settlement just a few miles from Stonehenge. The program reaches the most viewers since *Gospel of Judas*.

Dog Whisperer with Cesar Millan celebrates 100 episodes.

The first annual 'Expedition Week' is launched.

National Geographic Channel teamed up with science mag *Mental Floss* and Leftfield Pictures for 2015's special, *Brain Surgery Live*.

2009

On Board Air Force One, with exclusive access to President Obama boarding his first official flight, becomes the Channel's highest rated one-hour premiere to date.

Waking the Baby Mammoth premieres, reaching 5.2 million viewers.

NGC receives highest score for quality and is ranked #1 for trust among all cable networks in Harris Interactive's Equitrend study.

NGC receives 19 Emmy nominations for news and documentaries and a total of 24 Emmy nominations in 2008 and 2009 — the most award nominations of any cable network.

2010

Nat Geo Wild is launched with nearly 50 million subscribers.

Largest cross-platform initiative in National Geographic history to date — *Great Migrations* — is rolled out.

NGC acquires worldwide TV rights to Tim Hetherington and Sebastien Junger's *Restrepo*, and airs the doc in the fall.

2011

Alaska State Troopers is NGC's highest rated returning series to date.

David Lyle is named CEO of NGC U.S. in August.

Howard T. Owens is named president of National Geographic Channels U.S. in November, and Courteney Monroe comes to the company from HBO as CMO.

Brain Games, one of the highest-rating series to air on NGC to date, makes its debut.

George W. Bush: The 9/11 Interview scores a 1.7 rating.

continues on page 074 ▶

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNELS U.S. SPOTLIGHT

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He cites series such as *The Incredible Dr. Pol*, strands such as 'Big Cat Week' and the channel's long-standing relationship with "Dog Whisperer" Cesar Millan as indicative of Wild's content approach: "putting animals first, and also pushing forward the mission of the society, particularly as it relates to wildlife protection and preservation of the planet."

Recent shows with innovative, "all access" looks at natural habitats such as *Safari Live* and *Wild Yellowstone* point towards an effort to, as Daniels puts it, "reinvigorate the blue-chip nature genre."

For the nets under the National Geographic Channels umbrella, a revamped corporate structure that arrived with the announcement of National Geographic Partners in November should provide what Monroe calls "an incredibly distinct competitive advantage – we now have the potential to work across a spectrum of platforms and media assets that is unparalleled."

The restructure results from the expansion of the partnership between the National Geographic Society and 21st Century Fox under which Fox, which previously had owned a majority stake in Nat Geo's cable channels, will own 73% of National Geographic Partners, which outside of the channels encompasses the magazine, digital and social platforms, maps, travel and other media.

Monroe uses an upcoming event series – *Red Planet* from Grazer, Howard and Radical Media



Daniels



Anthology series 'Breakthrough,' exec produced by Brian Grazer and Ron Howard, explored developments in science and technology.

– as an example of how the new structure will impact rolling out select content going forward.

"We could have a cover story on National Geographic

magazine, a companion book, kids' media, and a speakers' series around it," she offers. "The opportunity to take this premium television content and turn it into a cross-platform event and part of the zeitgeist is there with National Geographic Partners, and it also affords us the opportunity to go to potential advertisers and sponsors with an offering for them to associate themselves with something more than just a television show."

That arrangement could bode well for several projects on tap at NGC, which, besides premium factual content, will also incorporate more scripted programming (with former Shine exec

Carolyn Bernstein recently hired as its first head of global scripted development and production) and feature docs. Of the latter, Monroe says: "It's a space that National Geographic should definitely play in. We will play in it opportunistically – it's not a tonnage play for us."

Coupled with other upcoming projects such as Morgan Freeman's *The Story of God* and a new season of acclaimed climate change series *Years of Living Dangerously* (originally on Showtime but now moving to NGC), Monroe proclaims that National Geographic Channel is poised to "harness the power of both our brand and our global reach," while aiming to inspire both its core audience and new generation of explorers.

"People give us high marks for quality," says Monroe. "What we want to focus on now is making sure that people know us as being highly relevant, resonant and entertaining."

2012	2013	2014	2015
<p><i>Doomsday Preppers</i> makes its debut, and its second season premiere in November has more than one million people tune in.</p> <p><i>SEAL Team Six: The Raid on Osama Bin Laden</i> marks the first feature film NGC airs as an original broadcast. Airing it two days before the presidential election in the U.S., the film averages 2.7 million viewers.</p>	<p>Scripted drama <i>Killing Lincoln</i>, the first of the <i>Killing...</i> franchise based on Bill O'Reilly's book series, airs in February and sets records with an average 3.4 million tuning in.</p>	<p><i>Cosmos: A Space-Time Odyssey</i> debuts in March on NGC and Fox, and attracts 135 million people globally, and 45 million viewers in the U.S. who watched some part of the series.</p> <p>Courteney Monroe is named CEO of NGC U.S., replacing David Lyle.</p> <p>Tim Pastore is named president of NGC U.S., replacing Howard T. Owens.</p>	<p>NGC teams with Brian Grazer, Ron Howard and GE for a limited science and technology series, 'Breakthrough.'</p> <p>NGC hosts the first brain surgery aired live on American television via <i>Brain Surgery Live</i>.</p> <p>'Explorer' returns after a five-year hiatus.</p> <p>Under a US\$725 million deal, 21st Century Fox and the National Geographic Society form National Geographic Partners, which sees Fox take 73% of the new company, including the cable channels, the print magazine, digital and social platforms and other divisions. •</p>



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A NEW KIND OF BOX OFFICE

The phrase “educational distribution” doesn’t usually get the film industry excited. However, when fully executed, it produces some of the most dynamic, vibrant and meaningful ways of reaching an audience. It can also return significant revenue for a film. So why isn’t it prioritized more often in a release strategy? One reason is confusion about what it is – and it is many things, and involves many screens.

Yes, educational distribution includes the use of a film in a classroom setting. That kind of use is considered “non-theatrical.” But educational distribution also enables individuals and organizations to host community screenings by licensing “semi-theatrical” screening rights. These individuals and organizations become “exhibitors” who engage their own communities to screen the film together. Also included under the umbrella of educational distribution is the licensing of the semi-theatrical (or public performance) rights to a university library even before a screening is planned, as a way to provide access and opportunity for students, faculty and staff to be able to use the film for public showings and other events on campus.

Because discussion materials and resources are often included with any public performance package, the impact typically goes far beyond a single screening, allowing the film to be truly used in the manner that the filmmaker intended.

Like theatrical box office for docs, there is no formula for success in the educational market. Just like a theatrical release, an ‘educational release’ requires individualized research and outreach to identify the demographic most likely to use a particular film. A successful release will involve identifying not only traditional educational contacts like media librarians, educators, department heads, and student groups on a school campus, but also non-educational contacts such as non-profits, NGOs, churches, training centers, museums, and businesses that would have reason to show the film to their community. In the case of *The Invisible War*, for example, this kind of outreach led to a comprehensive licensing deal

with the U.S. Military and the Canadian Armed Forces who are now using the film as part of an ongoing training initiative at hundreds of installations across the globe.

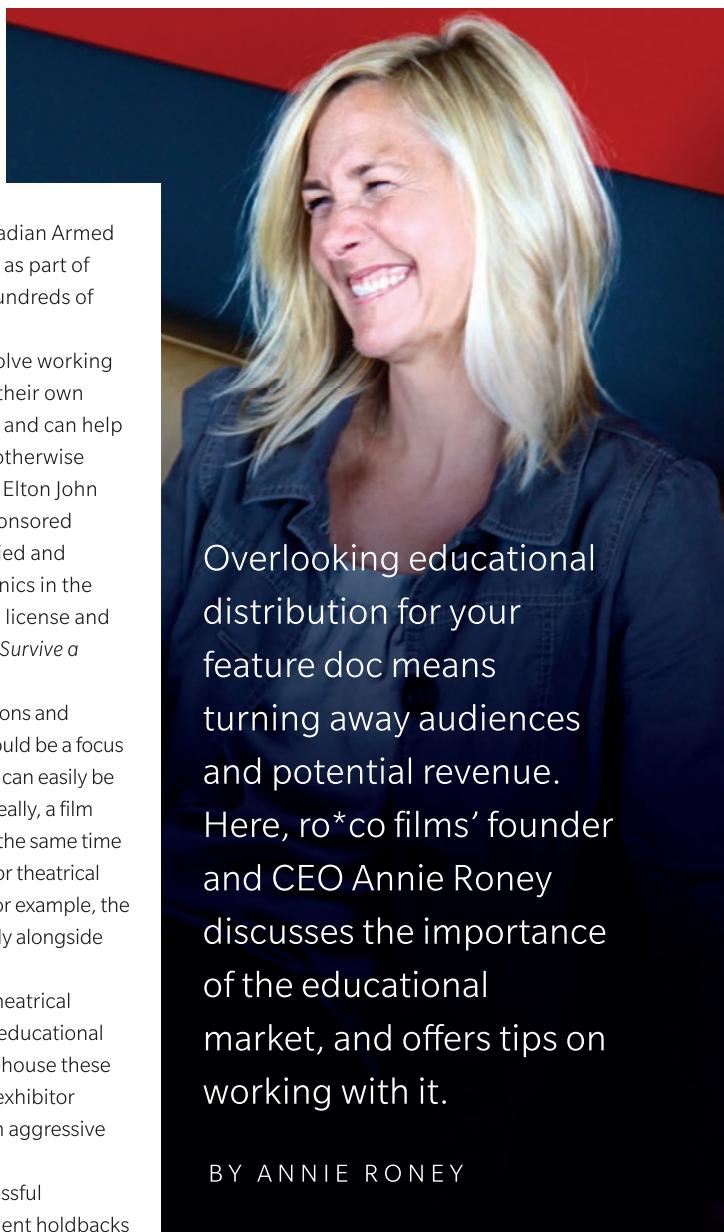
A successful release can also involve working with grants and donors that have their own reasons for wanting the film used, and can help get the film to organizations that otherwise wouldn’t have a budget for it. The Elton John AIDS Foundation, for example, sponsored a screening campaign that identified and engaged rural HIV/AIDS health clinics in the U.S. by “gifting” them a screening license and support materials to show *How to Survive a Plague* to their communities.

Capturing interest from organizations and individuals aligned with the film should be a focus from the first day of production and can easily be done through the film’s website. Ideally, a film will begin its educational release at the same time or shortly after its festival premiere or theatrical release. With *The Hunting Ground*, for example, the film was distributed semi-theatrically alongside the theatrical release.

Traditionally, though, almost all theatrical “all rights” distributors exploit the educational market last. Most distributors warehouse these rights with companies that let the exhibitor find the film, rather than leading an aggressive campaign to find the exhibitor.

Particularly destructive to a successful educational run is the lack of sufficient holdbacks against VOD and home video distribution. It is difficult to excite an organization to host a screening for their community when it is already widely available on digital platforms and in retail stores. In other words, releasing the film on VOD and on home video too early can cannibalize the returns from educational distribution. A three- to six-month window of exclusivity is best.

If you are selling your film to an all rights theatrical distributor, ask them what their plan is for the educational market and which companies they like to work with. Ask them if they intend to carve out an educational window prior to their VOD release. Ask them for projections of VOD and educational revenue.



Overlooking educational distribution for your feature doc means turning away audiences and potential revenue. Here, ro*co films’ founder and CEO Annie Roney discusses the importance of the educational market, and offers tips on working with it.

BY ANNIE RONEY

The key is to find an educational distribution company that has invested in this type of work and understands the market and its potential. Educational distribution requires a solid infrastructure and staffing for both outreach and fulfillment. Be sure those are fully in place with a distributor. Simply purchasing an email list and hoping for sales in the educational market will not yield the best results for a film. Ask a distributor for specific case studies and success stories regarding educational sales.

Not all documentary film is a fit for the educational market, but evaluating the potential before giving the rights away is always a good idea. •

Run this way

Joseph "Rev Run" Simmons rose to prominence in the 1980s as one third of the pioneering rap trio Run-DMC, one of the first hip-hop acts to emerge as a radio-friendly, pop-culture sensation.

Run-DMC cultivated mainstream media success with its 1983 single "It's Like That." The trio's self-titled album would follow a year later, charting at No. 53 on the Billboard charts and would help Run-DMC become the first in the genre to be certified gold.

In 1986, the group released its third studio album, *Raising Hell*, breaking barriers in the process. The seminal record would go on to achieve triple platinum status due in large part to a collaboration with Aerosmith's Steven Tyler and Joe Perry on the hip-hop infused cover of Aerosmith's hit "Walk This Way," which cracked the top 5 of the Billboard Hot 100.

Though Rev Run has semi-retired from lighting up stages across the globe, his media empire has since grown to encompass unscripted TV, having starred alongside his family on such series as MTV's *Run's House*, The Cooking Channel's *Rev Run's Sunday Suppers* and Travel Channel's *Rev Run's Around the World*.

Having previously co-authored *Manology: Secrets of Your Man's Mind Revealed*, Simmons and R&B singer-turned-actor Tyrese Gibson will once again team up on U.S. net OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network's *It's Not You, It's Men*. Premiering on January 23, the relationship-focused primetime talk show will take the public to "man school" through unique viewpoints on such topics as "men-ogamy," modern-day romance, cheating, sex, marriage and dating. In between working on his multiple unscripted projects, the good Reverend took time out for an email interview.

How did *It's Not You, It's Men* come to be?

Tyrese was on Arsenio Hall's show and made contact with the producer [showrunner Eric Pankowski] and they asked Tyrese [if he] would be interested in doing a show. Tyrese suggested he and I create a talk show together.

The network has said that the series will dish on "everything viewers need to know about men and love." What do we need to know about men and love?

There's two points of view on the show: Coming from a very married man, myself, and a very single man, Tyrese. You want to be sure to watch.

BY DANIELE ALCINII

Can you reveal some of the celebrity guests and how you went about selecting them?

You'll see Vin Diesel, Marlon Wayans, Tisha Campbell-Martin, Amber Rose and many others. Some are friends and others requested to be on the show.

In addition to music, fashion, publishing books and being ordained, you currently have three series on air. How do you find time to continue working on new projects? Do you have any new reality TV projects in 2016?

I'm very busy now and happy to work on these shows so that makes it easy!

You've been with your wife Justine for 21 years. What's the secret to a successful marriage? What would your wife say it is?

Be a professional forgiver. It's all about compromise and communication in marriage.

Your family has previously featured prominently in several of your series. What made you decide to expose your family to a very public life?

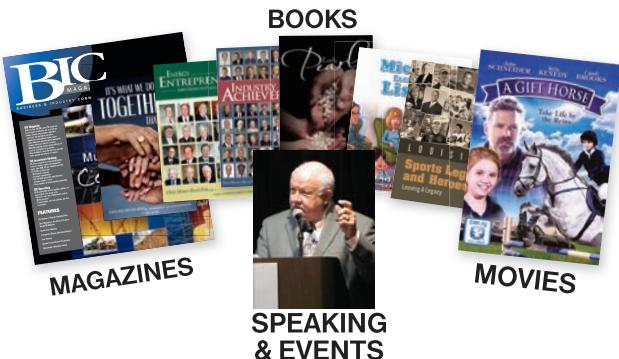
My shows are all ministry to me. •

Joseph "Rev Run" Simmons (right), with *It's Not You, It's Men* co-host Tyrese Gibson.



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BIC Media teams up with Mission Media for latest project

BIC Media Solutions' next book, "Rock Bottom & Back," will chronicle the experiences of 12 men and women who overcame seemingly insurmountable adversities to become successful in their business and personal lives.

"Rock Bottom & Back" will also be adapted into a 30-minute film segment that will be shopped to TV networks as a pilot for a potential series. BIC Media Solutions is teaming up with newly formed Mission Media Productions, the production arm of The New Orleans Mission, for the film segment. Established in 1989, The New Orleans Mission is a private 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization initially created as a service provider for a growing population of homeless men living in the city. Today, The New Orleans Mission is the largest faith-based private service provider among 60 shelters catering to the homeless population of New Orleans.

"Rock Bottom & Back" will feature several individuals, including The New Orleans Mission's David Bottner, who serves as executive director for the organization. The New Orleans Mission is the largest, full-service Christian charity in the Gulf South.

Other figures featured in "Rock Bottom & Back" include Gabriel Alvarado, a CITGO fire chief who was burned in a refinery fire in 2009 and now speaks to workers about safety issues; Troy Duhon, a successful car dealership owner and philanthropist who endured severe damage to his Louisiana business in Hurricane Katrina and now shares the word of God through "God's Not Dead" and "God's Not Dead 2;" Jerry Strickland, founder and former CEO of AltairStrickland and author of the inspirational book "Turnarounds," and his son, Whitney Strickland.

Steven Scaffidi, director of development, marketing and media for The New Orleans Mission, has been in the production business for approximately 30 years. When he started working at The New Orleans Mission, his goal was to put together a media department where the organization would produce projects.

"This project is a great fit for The New Orleans Mission and Mission Media," Scaffidi said. "We will help BIC Media Solutions produce segments of 'Rock Bottom & Back.' The story of 'Rock Bottom & Back' is a story of many at The New Orleans Mission. Our mission is to reach out to hurting and homeless people. When somebody ends up homeless, that person has hit rock bottom. Being at the mission and seeing these kinds of stories firsthand, we became very interested in partnering with BIC Media Solutions on 'Rock Bottom & Back.'"

BIC Media Solutions has retained Susan Mustafa, who co-wrote the New York Times-bestselling true crime thriller "The Most Dangerous Animal of All" with Gary L. Stewart, to write "Rock Bottom & Back." BIC Media Solutions is also partnering with Mascot Books on "Rock Bottom & Back."

The initial film segment will feature two or three of the individuals who appear in the book.

To nominate an individual to be featured in "Rock Bottom & Back" or for more information about BIC Media Solutions, contact Earl Heard at earlheard@bicalliance.com or Rose Gladner at rose@bicalliance.com, or call (800) 460-4242.



From left are Steven Scaffidi and David Bottner of The New Orleans Mission and Earl Heard of BIC Media Solutions. BIC Media Solutions is partnering with Scaffidi, a seasoned filmmaker, on its latest project, "Rock Bottom & Back." Scaffidi manages the newly formed Mission Media Productions, the production arm of The New Orleans Mission.



Jerry Strickland, left, founder and former CEO of AltairStrickland, sits with his son, Whitney Strickland, during a filming segment for "Rock Bottom & Back."

LET'S TALK



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